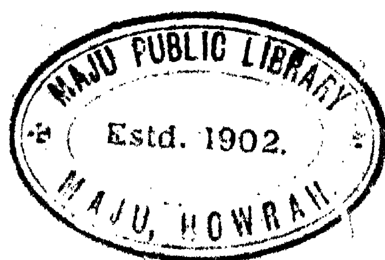
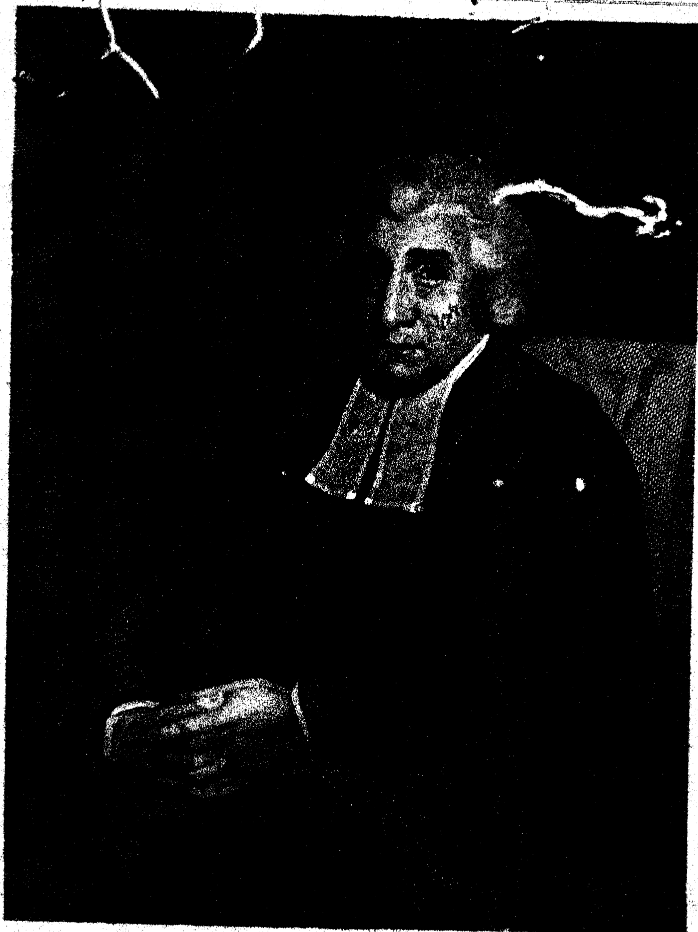

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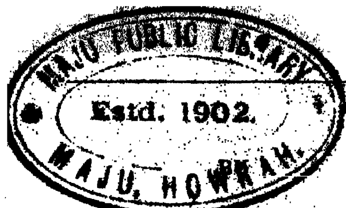
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HUGH BLAIR, D.D.

LECTURES

ON

RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTRES.



HUGH BLAIR, D.D. F.R.S. ED.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE HIGH CHURCH,

AND PROFESSOR

OF RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTRES, IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

A NEW EDITION.—IN ONE VOLUME.

REVISED AND CORRECTED

WITH A CRITICAL PREFACE,

BY

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AND FELLOW EXTRAORDINARY OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE,

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1827.

LECTURES

ON

RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTRES.

PRINTED BY JAMES BULLOCK, LOMBARD STREET, WHITEFRIARS.

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PREFACE

BY THE EDITOR.

It is not the scope of the Editor of these Lectures, to travel into the biography of Blair. And yet, to be silent altogether upon *his* life, who has bequeathed to the world so valuable a legacy, might also be an inconvenient omission.

Dr. Hugh Blair was born in Edinburgh on the 7th of April, 1718. His father, John Blair, who was a merchant, occupied a high post in the magistracy of that city, and descended from the ancient family of Blair, in Ayrshire. Neither his infancy nor boyhood was particularly signalised: but at the age of twelve years he first matriculated into that University, of which, as a professor, he was destined to become the distinguished ornament. His career, both as a scholar and a divine, was little diversified by external incident. The few details of it which survive, have been embodied into a Memoir by his friend, Mr. Finlayson, but it is a superficial and imperfect account.

Such as it is, however, it is all that we possess, authentically, of the life of BLAIR.

During the course of his academical incumbency, which lasted eleven years—and while he was yet an undergraduate—BLAIR produced, as a class exercise, an Essay, entitled, *Περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ*, or, "*On the Beautiful.*" The professors of the University were so struck with the masterly powers displayed in this piece, that they appointed it to be read in public, at the conclusion of the session. It was an honour which made a deep impression upon the youthful mind of our aspirant; and it is related by MR. FINLAYSON, that he treasured that Essay to the day of his death, as the first earnest of his future fame. It determined, at once, the bias of his genius towards polite literature; and, without a question, was mainly influential in the production of these "LECTURES" afterward. On this account, far more than for its own merits—which are yet considerable—the Essay *Περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ* claims to be remembered with a peculiar interest in the life of BLAIR. The volume to which these remarks are prefixed, is a mere *enlargement* of that original plan, and may be safely pronounced the most comprehensive treatise, "On the Beautiful," which this, or any language, affords. No system of education is now considered to be perfect, into which these admirable Lectures do not enter as a text-book. Whether the pupil be destined for the more

PREFACE.

The following Lectures were read in the University of Edinburgh, for twenty-four years. The publication of them, at present, was not altogether a matter of choice. Imperfect copies of them in manuscript, from notes taken by students who heard them read, were first privately handed about; and afterward frequently exposed to public sale. When the author saw them circulate so currently, as even to be quoted in print,* and found himself often threatened with surreptitious publications of them, he judged it to be high time that they should proceed from his own hand, rather than come into public view under some very defective and erroneous form.

They were originally designed for the initiation of youth into the study of Belles Lettres, and of Composition. With the same intention they are now published; and, therefore, the form of Lectures, in which they were at first composed, is still retained. The author gives them to the world, neither as a work wholly original, nor as a compilation from the writings of others. On every subject contained in them, he has thought for himself. He consulted his own ideas and reflections: and a great part of what will be found in these Lectures is entirely his own. At the same time, he availed himself of the ideas and reflections of others, as far as he thought them proper to be adopted. To proceed in this manner was his duty as a public professor. It was incumbent on him, to convey to his pupils all the knowledge that could improve them; to deliver not merely what was new, but what might be useful, from whatever quarter it came. He hopes, that to such as are studying to cultivate their taste, to form their style, or to prepare themselves for public speaking or composition, his Lectures will afford a more comprehensive view of what relates to these subjects, than, as far as he knows, is to be received from any one book in our language.

In order to render his work of greater service, he has generally referred to the books which he consulted, as far as he remembers

* Biographia Britannica, Article Addison.

them; that the readers might be directed to any farther illustration which they afford. But, as such a length of time has elapsed since the first composition of his Lectures, he may, perhaps, have adopted the sentiments of some author into whose writings he had then looked, without now remembering whence he derived them.

In the opinions which he has delivered concerning such a variety of authors, and of literary matters, as come under his consideration he cannot expect that all his readers will concur with him. The subjects are of such a nature, as allow room for much diversity of taste and sentiment: and the author will respectfully submit to the judgment of the public.

Retaining the simplicity of the lecturing style, as best fitten for conveying instruction, he has aimed, in his language, at no more than perspicuity. If, after the liberties which it was necessary for him to take, in criticising the style of the most eminent writers in our language, his own style shall be thought open to reprehension, all that he can say is, that his book will add one to the many proofs already afforded to the world, of its being much easier to give instruction than to set example.

Those Lectures which treat of the Origin and Progress of Language, are the most profound, and least capable of daily application: but it is impossible to read them without deriving infinite improvement, as well to the heart as to the mind. Every thing else is practical, and pertinent to all the pursuits of life. The most experienced Senator, equally with the unpractised Student—the most acute Pleader—the most impressive Preacher, mav rise advantaged from the perusal of BLAIR.

liberal pursuits of life, or to make his way by the exercise of the useful arts, he will derive an incalculable advantage from the treasures which they unfold. They are as essential to form the accomplished mechanic, as the accomplished rhetorician. They contain within themselves the elements of excellence in every walk of knowledge. They are a collection of principles, capable of universal application; and unite, more than any book which has ever yet been presented to the schools, all that is practical, with all that is philosophical, in education.

With regard to ELOQUENCE, in its three great departments—the Senate, the Bar, and the Pulpit—where physical disqualifications do not exist, it is impossible *not* to become an orator by following BLAIR. "*Nulla via regia patet*" has been predicated of all acquirements, which are the result of exerted intellect: but it is the glory of our Author, to have made the nearest approach to that royal road. His rules are at once so practical and so efficient, so masterly, and yet so mechanical, that they conduct the pupil, almost intuitively, to excellence. It is difficult to say whether their beauty, as a composition, or their utility, as rules for excelling, deserve the palm. Their simplicity fits them for mind in its adolescence; while their profound philosophy teems with suggestions, which let in a light upon the most gifted and experienced ambition!

On the subject of CRITICISM, which may be defined the nice apprehension of faults and beauties in composition, this volume is altogether unrivalled and complete. By adopting its precepts, we shall not only be sensible of a rapid improvement, in whatever we undertake, ourselves; but we shall be more and more alive to the graces and defects of others. The occupation of *Reviewing*, which was formerly a liberal pursuit, is now degenerated into a venal trade; but never yet arose there a guide, like BLAIR, for the formation of an HONEST REVIEWER. To those who would *become* such, the recommendation of the Roman poet applies here—even with more than its original force—

Nocturnâ versare manu, versare diurnâ.

TASTE, though it be said to have no d standard, has been very ably illustrated, and accurately fixed, by BLAIR. He develops from their first germ the elements of an universal taste; and inculcates unerring rules, both for its acquisition and perfection. The true criterion of taste in writing, is fidelity to nature; and to command this, an author must be largely exercised in every branch of knowledge. Such, in a pre-eminent degree, were the qualifications of our accomplished Professor. The secret of all the motives which actuate the human bosom, and the mystery by which all the passions may be called forth, and put into agitation, were peculiarly his.



LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the most distinguished privileges which Providence has conferred upon mankind, is the power of communicating their thoughts to one another. Destitute of this power, Reason would be a solitary, and, in some measure, an unavailing principle. Speech is the great instrument by which man becomes beneficial to man: and it is to the intercourse and transmission of thought, by means of speech, that we are chiefly indebted for the improvement of thought itself. Small are the advances which a single unassisted individual can make towards perfecting any of his powers. What we call human reason, is not the effort or ability of one, so much as it is the result of the reason of many, arising from lights mutually communicated, in consequence of discourse and writing.

It is obvious, then, that writing and discourse are objects entitled to the highest attention. Whether the influence of the speaker, or the entertainment of the hearer, be consulted; whether utility or pleasure be the principal aim in view, we are prompted, by the strongest motives, to study how we may communicate our thoughts to one another with most advantage. Accordingly we find, that in almost every nation, as soon as language had extended itself beyond that scanty communication which was requisite for the supply of men's necessities, the improvement of discourse began to attract regard. In the language even of rude uncultivated tribes, we can trace some attention to the grace and force of those expressions which they used, when they sought to persuade or to affect. They were early sensible of a beauty in discourse, and endeavoured to give it certain decorations which experience had taught them it was capable of receiving, long before the study of those decorations was formed into a regular art.

But, among nations in a civilized state, no art has been cultivated with more care, than that of language, style, and composition. The attention paid to it may, indeed, be assumed as one mark of the progress of society towards its most improved period. For, according as society improves and flourishes, men acquire more in-

The elevated sentiments and high examples which poetry, eloquence, and history are often bringing under our view, naturally tend to nourish in our minds public spirit, the love of glory, contempt of external fortune, and the admiration of what is truly illustrious and great.

I will not go so far as to say that the improvement of taste and of virtue is the same; or that they may always be expected to coexist in an equal degree. More powerful correctives than taste can apply are necessary for reforming the corrupt propensities which too frequently prevail among mankind. Elegant speculations are sometimes found to float on the surface of the mind, while bad passions possess the interior regions of the heart. At the same time this cannot but be admitted, that the exercise of taste is, in its native tendency, moral and purifying. From reading the most admired productions of genius, whether in poetry or prose, almost every one rises with some good impressions left on his mind: and though these may not always be durable, they are at least to be ranked among the means of disposing the heart to virtue. One thing is certain, and I shall hereafter have occasion to illustrate it more fully, that, without possessing the virtuous affections in a strong degree, no man can attain eminence in the sublime parts of eloquence. He must feel what a good man feels, if he expects greatly to move, or to interest, mankind. They are the ardent sentiments of honour, virtue, magnanimity, and public spirit, that only can kindle that fire of genius, and call up into the mind those high ideas, which attract the admiration of ages; and if this spirit be necessary to produce the most distinguished efforts of eloquence, it must be necessary also to our relishing them with proper taste and feeling.

On these general topics I shall dwell no longer; but proceed directly to the consideration of the subjects which are to employ the following Lectures. They divide themselves into five parts. First, some introductory dissertations on the nature of Taste, and upon the Sources of its Pleasures: Secondly, the consideration of Language: Thirdly, of Style: Fourthly, of Eloquence properly so called, or public speaking in its different kinds: Lastly, a critical examination of the most distinguished Species of Composition, both in prose and verse.

LECTURE II.

TASTE.

The nature of the present undertaking leads me to begin with some inquiries concerning Taste; as it is this faculty which is always appealed to in disquisitions concerning the merit of discourse and writing.

There are few subjects on which men talk more loosely and indistinctly than on Taste; few which it is more difficult to explain with precision; and none which in this course of Lectures will appear more dry or abstract. What I have to say on the subject shall be in the following order. I shall first explain the Nature of Taste as a power or faculty in the human mind. I shall next consider how far it is an improvable faculty. I shall shew the sources of its improvement, and the characters of Taste in its most perfect state. I shall then examine the various fluctuations to which it is liable, and inquire whether there be any standard to which we can bring the different tastes of men, in order to distinguish the corrupted from the true.

Taste may be defined, 'The power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art.' The first question that occurs concerning it is, whether it is to be considered as an internal sense, or as an exertion of reason. Reason is a very general term; but if we understand by it that power of the mind, which in speculative matters discovers truth, and in practical matters judges of the fitness of means to an end, I apprehend the question may be easily answered. For nothing can be more clear, than that taste is not resolvable into any such operation of reason. It is not merely through a discovery of the understanding, or a deduction of argument, that the mind receives pleasure from a beautiful prospect or a fine poem. Such objects often strike us intuitively, and make a strong impression, when we are unable to assign the reasons of our being pleased. They sometimes strike in the same manner the philosopher and the peasant; the boy and the man. Hence the faculty by which we relish such beauties, seems more nearly allied to a feeling of sense, than to a process of the understanding; and accordingly, from an external sense it has borrowed its name; that sense by which we receive and distinguish the pleasures of food having, in several languages, given rise to the word Taste in the metaphorical meaning under which we now consider it. However, as, in all subjects which regard the operations of the mind, the inaccurate use of words is to be carefully avoided, it must not be inferred from what I have said that reason is

entirely excluded from the exertions of taste. Though taste, beyond doubt, be ultimately founded on a certain natural and instinctive sensibility to beauty, yet reason, as I shall shew hereafter, assists taste in many of its operations, and serves to enlarge its power.*

Taste, in the sense in which I have explained it, is a faculty common in some degree to all men. Nothing that belongs to human nature is more general than the relish of beauty of one kind or other; of what is orderly, proportioned, grand, harmonious, new, or sprightly. In children, the rudiments of taste discover themselves very early in a thousand instances; in their fondness for regular bodies, their admiration of pictures and statues, and imitations of all kinds; and their strong attachment to whatever is new or marvellous. The most ignorant peasants are delighted with ballads and tales, and are struck with the beautiful appearance of nature in the earth and heavens. Even in the deserts of America, where human nature shews itself in its most uncultivated state, the savages have their ornaments of dress, their war and their death-songs, their harangues, and their orators. We must, therefore, conclude the principles of taste to be deeply founded in the human mind. It is no less essential to man to have some discernment of beauty, than it is to possess the attributes of reason and of speech.†

But although none be wholly devoid of this faculty, yet the degrees in which it is possessed are widely different. In some men only the feeble glimmerings of taste appear; the beauties

* See Dr. Gerard's Essay on Taste.---D'Alembert's Reflections on the Use and Abuse of Philosophy in Matters which relate to Taste.---Reflections Critiques sur la Poesië et sur la Peinture, tome ii. ch. 22---31.---Elements of Criticism, c. 25.---Mr. Hume's Essay on the Standard of Taste.---Introduction to the Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful.

† On the subject of Taste, considered as a power or faculty of the mind, much less is it to be found among the ancient than among the modern rhetorical and critical writers. The following remarkable passage in Cicero serves however to shew, that his ideas on this subject agree perfectly with what has been said above. He is speaking of the beauties of style and numbers. 'Illud autem nequis admiretur quonam modo hæc vulgus imperitorum in audiendo, notet; cum in omni genere, tum in hoc ipso, magna quædam est vis, incredibilisque naturæ. Omnes enim tacito quodam sensu, sine ullâ arte aut ratione, quæ sint in artibus de rationibus recta et prava dijudicant: idque cum faciunt in picturis, et in signis, et in aliis operibus, ad quorum intelligentiam a naturá minus habent instrumenti, tum multo ostendunt magis in verborum, numerorum, vocumque judicio; quod ea sunt in communibus infixa sensibus; neque earum rerum quenquam funditus naturæ voluit esse expertem.' Cic. de Orat. lib. iii. cap. 50. edit. Gruteri.——Quintilian seems to include Taste (for which, in the sense which we now give to that word, the ancients appear to have had no distinct name) under what he calls judicium. 'Locus de judicio, meâ quidem opinione adeo partibus hujus operis omnibus connectus ac mistus est, ut ne a sententiis quidem aut verbis saltem singulis possit separari, nec magis arte traditur quam gustus aut odor.---Ut contraria vitemus et communia, ne quid in eloquendo corruptum obscurumque sit, referatur oportet ad sensus qui non docentur.' Institut. lib. vi. cap. 3. edit. Obrechti.

which they relish are of the coarsest kind; and of these they have but a weak and confused impression: while in others, taste rises to an acute discernment, and a lively enjoyment of the most refined beauties. In general we may observe, that in the powers and pleasures of taste, there is a more remarkable inequality among men, than is usually found, in point of common sense, reason, and judgment. The constitution of our nature in this, as in all other respects, discovers admirable wisdom. In the distribution of those talents which are necessary for man's well-being, Nature hath made less distinction among her children. But in the distribution of those which belong only to the ornamental part of life, she hath bestowed her favours with more frugality. She hath both sown the seeds more sparingly, and rendered a higher culture requisite for bringing them to perfection.

This inequality of taste among men is owing, without doubt, in part, to the different frame of their natures; to nicer organs, and finer internal powers, with which some are endowed beyond others. But, if it be owing in part to nature, it is owing to education and culture still more. The illustration of this leads to my next remark on this subject, that taste is a most improvable faculty, if there be any such in human nature; a remark which gives great encouragement to such a course of study as we are now proposing to pursue. Of the truth of this assertion we may easily be convinced, by only reflecting on that immense superiority which education and improvement give to civilized above barbarous nations, in refinement of taste; and on the superiority which they give in the same nation to those who have studied the liberal arts, above the rude and untaught vulgar. The difference is so great, that there is perhaps no one particular in which these two classes of men are so far removed from each other, as in respect of the powers and the pleasures of taste; and assuredly for this difference no other general cause can be assigned but culture and education.—I shall now proceed to shew what the means are by which taste becomes so remarkably susceptible of cultivation and progress.

Reflect first upon that great law of our nature, that exercise is the chief source of improvement in all our faculties. This holds both in our bodily, and in our mental, powers. It holds even in our external senses; although these be less the subject of cultivation than any of our other faculties. We see how acute the senses become in persons whose trade or business leads to nice exertions of them. Touch, for instance, becomes infinitely more exquisite in men whose employment requires them to examine the polish of bodies, than it is in others. They who deal in microscopical observations, or are accustomed to engrave on precious stones, acquire surprising accuracy of sight in discerning the minutest objects; and practice in attending to different flavours and tastes of liquors,

wonderfully improves the power of distinguishing them, and of tracing their composition. Placing internal taste therefore on the footing of a simple sense, it cannot be doubted that frequent exercise and curious attention to its proper objects, must greatly heighten its power. Of this we have one clear proof in that part of taste which is called an ear for music. Experience every day shews, that nothing is more improvable. Only the simplest and plainest compositions are relished at first; use and practice extend our pleasure; teach us to relish finer melody, and by degrees enable us to enter into the intricate and compounded pleasures of harmony. So an eye for the beauties of painting is never all at once acquired. It is gradually formed by being conversant among pictures, and studying the works of the best masters.

Precisely in the same manner, with respect to the beauty of composition and discourse, attention to the most approved models, study of the best authors, comparisons of lower and higher degrees of the same beauties, operate towards the refinement of taste. When one is only beginning his acquaintance with works of genius, the sentiment which attends them is obscure and confused. He cannot point out the several excellences or blemishes of a performance which he peruses; he is at a loss on what to rest his judgment; all that can be expected is, that he should tell in general whether he be pleased or not. But allow him more experience in works of this kind, and his taste becomes by degrees more exact and enlightened. He begins to perceive not only the character of the whole, but the beauties and defects of each part; and is able to describe the peculiar qualities which he praises or blames. The mist is dissipated which seemed formerly to hang over the object; and he can at length pronounce firmly, and without hesitation, concerning it. Thus in taste, considered as mere sensibility, exercise opens a great source of improvement.

But although taste be ultimately founded on sensibility, it must not be considered as instinctive sensibility alone. Reason and good sense, as I before hinted, have so extensive an influence on all the operations and decisions of taste, that a thorough good taste may well be considered as a power compounded of natural sensibility to beauty, and of improved understanding. In order to be satisfied of this, let us observe, that the greater part of the productions of genius are no other than imitations of nature; representations of the characters, actions, or manners of men. The pleasure we receive from such imitations or representations is founded on mere taste; but to judge whether they be properly executed, belongs to the understanding, which compares the copy with the original.

In reading, for instance, such a poem as the Æneid, a great part of our pleasure arises from the plan or story being well conducted

and all the parts joined together with probability and due connexion; from the characters being taken from nature, the sentiments being suited to the characters, and the style to the sentiments. The pleasure which arises from a poem so conducted, is felt or enjoyed by taste as an internal sense; but the discovery of this conduct in the poem is owing to reason; and the more that reason enables us to discover such propriety in the conduct, the greater will be our pleasure. We are pleased, through our natural sense of beauty. Reason shews us why, and upon what grounds, we are pleased. Wherever, in works of taste, any resemblance to nature is aimed at; wherever there is any reference of parts to a whole; or of means to an end, as there is indeed in almost every writing and discourse; there the understanding must always have a great part to act.

Here then is a wide field for reason's exerting its powers in relation to the objects of Taste, particularly with respect to composition, and works of genius; and hence arises a second and a very considerable source of the improvement of taste, from the application of reason and good sense to such productions of genius. Spurious beauties, such as unnatural characters, forced sentiments, affected style, may please for a little; but they please only because their opposition to nature and to good sense has not been examined, or attended to. Once shew how nature might have been more justly imitated or represented; how the writer might have managed his subject to greater advantage; the illusion will presently be dissipated, and these false beauties will please no more.

From these two sources then, first, the frequent exercise of taste, and next the application of good sense and reason to the objects of taste, taste as a power of the mind receives its improvement. In its perfect state it is undoubtedly the result both of nature and of art. It supposes our natural sense of beauty to be refined by frequent attention to the most beautiful objects, and at the same time to be guided and improved by the light of the understanding.

I must be allowed to add, that as a sound head, so likewise a good heart, is a very material requisite to just taste. The moral beauties are not only in themselves superior to all others, but they exert an influence, either more near or more remote, on a great variety of other objects of taste. Wherever the affections, characters, or actions of men are concerned (and these certainly afford the noblest subjects to genius), there can be neither any just or affecting description of them, nor any thorough feeling of the beauty of that description, without our possessing the virtuous affections. He whose heart is indelicate or hard, he who has no admiration of what is truly noble or praiseworthy, nor the proper sympathetic sense of what is soft and tender, must have a very imperfect relish of the highest beauties of eloquence and poetry.

The characters of taste, when brought to its most improved state, are all reducible to two, Delicacy and Correctness.

Delicacy of taste respects principally the perfection of that natural sensibility on which taste is founded. It implies those finer organs or powers which enable us to discover beauties that lie hid from a vulgar eye. One may have strong sensibility, and yet be deficient in delicate taste. He may be deeply impressed by such beauties as he perceives; but he perceives only what is in some degree coarse, what is bold and palpable; while chaster and simpler ornaments escape his notice. In this state taste generally exists among rude and unrefined nations. But a person of delicate taste both feels strongly and feels accurately. He sees distinctions and differences where others see none; the most latent beauty does not escape him, and he is sensible of the smallest blemish. Delicacy of taste is judged of by the same marks that we use in judging of the delicacy of an external sense. As the goodness of the palate is not tried by strong flavours, but by a mixture of ingredients, where, notwithstanding the confusion, we remain sensible of each; in like manner, delicacy of internal taste appears, by a quick and lively sensibility to its finest, most compounded, or most latent objects.

Correctness of taste respects chiefly the improvement which that faculty receives through its connexion with the understanding. A man of correct taste is one who is never imposed on by counterfeit beauties; who carries always in his mind that standard of good sense which he employs in judging of every thing. He estimates with propriety the comparative merit of the several beauties which he meets with in any work of genius; refers them to their proper classes; assigns the principles, as far as they can be traced, whence their power of pleasing flows; and is pleased himself precisely in that degree in which he ought, and no more.

It is true that these two qualities of taste, delicacy and correctness, mutually imply each other. No taste can be exquisitely delicate without being correct; nor can be thoroughly correct without being delicate. But still a predominancy of one or other quality in the mixture is often visible. The power of delicacy is chiefly seen in discerning the true merit of a work; the power of correctness, in rejecting false pretensions to merit. Delicacy leans more to feeling; correctness more to reason and judgment. The former is more the gift of nature: the latter, more the product of culture and art. Among the ancient critics, Longinus possessed most delicacy; Aristotle, most correctness. Among the moderns, Mr. Addison is a high example of delicate taste; Dean Swift, had he written on the subject of criticism, would perhaps have afforded the example of a correct one.

Having viewed taste in its most improved and perfect state, I

come next to consider its deviations from that state, the fluctuations and changes to which it is liable; and to inquire whether, in the midst of these, there be any means of distinguishing a true from a corrupted taste. This brings us to the most difficult part of our task. For it must be acknowledged, that no principle of the human mind is, in its operations, more fluctuating and capricious than taste. Its variations have been so great and frequent, as to create a suspicion with some, of its being merely arbitrary; grounded on no foundation, ascertainable by no standard, but wholly dependant on changing fancy; the consequence of which would be, that all studies or regular inquiries concerning the objects of taste were vain. In architecture, the Grecian models were long esteemed the most perfect. In succeeding ages, the Gothic architecture alone prevailed, and afterward the Grecian taste revived in all its vigour, and engrossed the public admiration. In eloquence and poetry, the Asiatics at no time relished any thing but what was full of ornament, and splendid in a degree that we should denominate gaudy; whilst the Greeks admired only chaste and simple beauties, and despised the Asiatic ostentation. In our own country, how many writings that were greatly extolled two or three centuries ago, are now fallen into entire disrepute and oblivion! Without going back to remote instances, how very different is the taste of poetry which prevails in Great Britain now, from what prevailed there no longer ago than the reign of King Charles II., which the authors too of that time deemed an Augustan age: when nothing was in vogue but an affected brilliancy of wit; when the simple majesty of Milton was overlooked, and Paradise Lost almost entirely unknown; when Cowley's laboured and unnatural conceits were admired as the very quintessence of genius; Waller's gay sprightliness was mistaken for the tender spirit of love poetry; and such writers as Suckling and Etheridge were held in esteem for dramatic composition.

The question is, what conclusion we are to form from such instances as these? Is there any thing that can be called a standard of taste, by appealing to which we may distinguish between a good and a bad taste? Or is there in truth no such distinction; and are we to hold that, according to the proverb, there is no disputing of tastes; but that whatever pleases is right, for that reason, that it does please? This is the question, and a very nice and subtle one it is, which we are now to discuss.

I begin by observing, that if there be no such thing as any standard of taste, this consequence must immediately follow, that all tastes are equally good; a position which, though it may pass unnoticed in slight matters, and when we speak of the lesser differences among the tastes of men, yet when we apply it to the ex-

tremes, presently shews its absurdity. For is there any one who will seriously maintain that the taste of a Hottentot or a Laplander is as delicate and as correct as that of a Longinus or an Addison? or that he can be charged with no defect or incapacity, who thinks a common news-writer as excellent an historian as Tacitus? As it would be held downright extravagance to talk in this manner, we are led unavoidably to this conclusion, that there is some foundation for the preference of one man's taste to that of another; or that there is a good and a bad, a right and a wrong, in taste, as in other things.

But to prevent mistakes on this subject, it is necessary to observe next, that the diversity of tastes which prevails among mankind, does not in every case infer corruption of taste, or oblige us to seek for some standard in order to determine who are in the right. The tastes of men may differ very considerably as to their object, and yet none of them be wrong. One man relishes poetry most; another takes pleasure in nothing but history. One prefers comedy; another, tragedy. One admires the simple; another the ornamented style. The young are amused with gay and sprightly compositions. The elderly are more entertained with those of a graver cast. Some nations delight in bold pictures of manners, and strong representations of passion. Others incline to more correct and regular elegance both in description and sentiment. Though all differ, yet all pitch upon some one beauty which peculiarly suits their turn of mind; and therefore no one has a title to condemn the rest. It is not in matters of taste, as in questions of mere reason, where there is but one conclusion that can be true, and all the rest are erroneous. Truth, which is the object of reason, is one; beauty, which is the object of taste, is manifold. Taste, therefore, admits of latitude and diversity of objects, in sufficient consistency with goodness or justness of taste.

But then, to explain this matter thoroughly, I must observe farther, that this admissible diversity of tastes can only have place where the objects of taste are different. Where it is with respect to the same object that men disagree, when one condemns that as ugly, which another admires as highly beautiful; then it is no longer diversity, but direct opposition of taste that takes place; and therefore one must be in the right, and another in the wrong, unless that absurd paradox were allowed to hold, that all tastes are equally good and true. One man prefers Virgil to Homer. Suppose that I, on the other hand, admire Homer more than Virgil. I have as yet no reason to say that our tastes are contradictory. The other person is more struck with the elegance and tenderness which are the characteristics of Virgil: I, with the simplicity and fire of Homer. As long as neither of us deny that both Homer

and Virgil have great beauties, our difference falls within the compass of that diversity of tastes, which I have shewed to be natural and allowable. But if the other man shall assert that Homer has no beauties whatever; that he holds him to be a dull and spiritless writer, and that he would as soon peruse any old legend of knight-errantry, as the Iliad; then I exclaim, that my antagonist either is void of all taste, or that his taste is corrupted in a miserable degree; and I appeal to whatever I think the standard of taste, to shew him that he is in the wrong.

What that standard is, to which in such opposition of tastes, we are obliged to have recourse, remains to be traced. A standard properly signifies, that which is of such undoubted authority as to be the test of other things of the same kind. Thus a standard weight or measure is that which is appointed by law to regulate all other measures and weights. Thus the court is said to be the standard of good breeding; and the Scriptures of theological truth.

When we say that nature is the standard of taste, we lay down a principle very true and just, as far as it can be applied. There is no doubt, that in all cases where an imitation is intended of some object that exists in nature, as in representing human characters or actions, conformity to nature affords a full and distinct criterion of what is truly beautiful. Reason hath in such cases full scope for exerting its authority, for approving or condemning; by comparing the copy with the original. But there are innumerable cases in which this rule cannot be at all applied; and conformity to nature, is an expression frequently used, without any distinct or determinate meaning. We must therefore search for somewhat that can be rendered more clear and precise, to be the standard of taste.

Taste, as I before explained it, is ultimately founded on an internal sense of beauty, which is natural to men, and which, in its application to particular objects, is capable of being guided and enlightened by reason. Now, were there any one person who possessed in full perfection all the powers of human nature, whose internal senses were in every instance exquisite and just, and whose reason was unerring and sure, the determinations of such a person concerning beauty, would, beyond doubt, be a perfect standard for the taste of all others. Wherever their taste differed from his, it could be imputed only to some imperfection in their natural powers. But as there is no such living standard, no one person to whom all mankind will allow such submission to be due, what is there of sufficient authority to be the standard of the various and opposite tastes of men? most certainly there is nothing but the taste, as far as it can be gathered, of human nature. That which men concur the most in admiring must be held to be beautiful. His taste must be esteemed just and true, which coincides

with the general sentiments of men. In this standard we must rest. To the sense of mankind the ultimate appeal must ever lie, in all works of taste. If any one should maintain that sugar was bitter and tobacco was sweet, no reasonings could avail to prove it. The taste of such a person would infallibly be held to be diseased, merely because it differed so widely from the taste of the species to which he belongs. In like manner, with regard to the objects of sentiment or internal taste, the common feelings of men carry the same authority, and have a title to regulate the taste of every individual.

But have we then, it will be said, no other criterion of what is beautiful than the approbation of the majority? Must we collect the voices of others, before we form any judgment for ourselves, of what deserves applause in eloquence or poetry? By no means; there are principles of reason and sound judgment which can be applied to matters of taste, as well as to the subjects of science and philosophy. He who admires or censures any work of genius, is always ready, if his taste be in any degree improved, to assign some reasons for his decision. He appeals to principles, and points out the grounds on which he proceeds. Taste is a sort of compound power, in which the light of the understanding always mingles, more or less, with the feelings of sentiment.

But, though reason can carry us a certain length in judging concerning works of taste, it is not to be forgotten that the ultimate conclusions to which our reasonings lead, refer at last to sense and perception. We may speculate and argue concerning propriety of conduct in a tragedy, or an epic poem. Just reasonings on the subject will correct the caprice of unenlightened taste, and establish principles for judging of what deserves praise. But, at the same time, these reasonings appeal always, in the last resort, to feeling. The foundation upon which they rest, is what has been found from experience to please mankind universally. Upon this ground we prefer a simple and natural, to an artificial and affected style; a regular and well-connected story, to loose and scattered narratives; a catastrophe which is tender and pathetic, to one which leaves us unmoved. It is from consulting our own imagination and heart, and from attending to the feelings of others, that any principles are formed which acquire authority in matters of taste.*

* The difference between the authors who found the standard of taste upon the common feelings of human nature ascertained by general approbation, and those who found it upon established principles which can be ascertained by reason, is more an apparent than a real difference. Like many other literary controversies, it turns chiefly on modes of expression. For they who lay the greatest stress on sentiment and feeling, make no scruple of applying argument and reason to matters of taste. They appeal, like other writers, to established principles, in judging of the excellences of eloquence or poetry; and plainly shew, that the general approbation, to which

When we refer to the concurring sentiments of men as the ultimate test of what is to be accounted beautiful in the arts, this is to be always understood of men placed in such situations as are favourable to the proper exertions of taste. Every one must perceive, that among rude and uncivilized nations, and during the ages of ignorance and darkness, any loose notions that are entertained concerning such subjects carry no authority. In those states of society, taste has no materials on which to operate. It is either totally suppressed, or appears in its lowest and most imperfect form. We refer to the sentiments of mankind in polished and flourishing nations; when arts are cultivated and manners refined; when works of genius are subjected to free discussion, and taste is improved by science and philosophy.

Even among nations, at such a period of society, I admit, that accidental causes may occasionally warp the proper operations of taste; sometimes the state of religion, sometimes the form of government, may for a while pervert it; a licentious court may introduce a taste for false ornaments, and dissolute writings. The usage of one admired genius may procure approbation for his faults, and even render them fashionable. Sometimes envy may have power to bear down, for a little, productions of great merit; while popular humour, or party-spirit, may, at other times, exalt to a high, though short-lived, reputation, what little deserved it. But though such casual circumstances give the appearance of caprice to the judgments of taste, that appearance is easily corrected. In the course of time, the genuine taste of human nature never fails to disclose itself, and to gain the ascendant over any fantastic and corrupted modes of taste which may chance to have been introduced. These may have currency for a while, and mislead superficial judges; but being subjected to examination, by degrees they pass away; while that alone remains which is founded on sound reason, and the native feelings of men.

I by no means pretend, that there is any standard of taste, to which, in every particular instance, we can resort for clear and immediate determination. Where, indeed, is such a standard to be found for deciding any of those great controversies in reason and philosophy, which perpetually divide mankind? In the present

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they ultimately recur, is an approbation resulting from discussion as well as from sentiment. They, on the other hand, who, in order to vindicate taste from any suspicion of being arbitrary, maintain that it is ascertainable by the standard of reason, admit nevertheless, that what pleases universally, must on that account be held to be truly beautiful; and that no rules or conclusions concerning objects of taste can have any just authority, if they be found to contradict the general sentiments of men. These two systems, therefore, differ in reality very little from one another. Sentiment and reason enter into both; and by allowing to each of these powers its due place, both systems may be rendered consistent. Accordingly, it is in this light that I have endeavoured to place the subject.

case, there was plainly no occasion for any such strict and absolute provision to be made. In order to judge of what is morally good or evil, of what man ought, or ought not, in duty to do, it was fit that the means of clear and precise determination should be afforded us. But to ascertain in every case with the utmost exactness what is beautiful or elegant, was not at all necessary to the happiness of man. And therefore some diversity in feeling was here allowed to take place; and room was left for discussion and debate, concerning the degree of approbation to which any work of genius is entitled.

The conclusion, which it is sufficient for us to rest upon, is, that taste is far from being an arbitrary principle, which is subject to the fancy of every individual, and which admits of no criterion for determining whether it be false or true. Its foundation is the same in all human minds. It is built upon sentiments and perceptions which belong to our nature; and which in general operate with the same uniformity as our other intellectual principles. When these sentiments are perverted by ignorance and prejudice, they are capable of being rectified by reason. Their sound and natural state is ultimately determined, by comparing them with the general taste of mankind. Let men declaim as much as they please, concerning the caprice and the uncertainty of taste, it is found by experience, that there are beauties, which if they be displayed in a proper light, have power to command lasting and general admiration. In every composition, what interests the imagination and touches the heart, pleases all ages and all nations. There is a certain string to which, when properly struck, the human heart is so made as to answer.

Hence the universal testimony which the most improved nations of the earth have conspired, throughout a long tract of ages, to give to some few works of genius; such as the Iliad of Homer, and the Æneid of Virgil. Hence the authority which such works have acquired as standards, in some degree, of poetical composition; since from them, we are enabled to collect what the sense of mankind is, concerning those beauties which give them the highest pleasure, and which therefore poetry ought to exhibit. Authority or prejudice may, in one age or country, give a temporary reputation to an indifferent poet, or a bad artist: but when foreigners, or when posterity, examine his works, his faults are discerned, and the genuine taste of human nature appears. 'Opinionum commenta delet dies; naturæ judicia confirmat.' Time overthrows the illusions of opinion, but establishes the decisions of nature.

LECTURE III.

CRITICISM.---GENIUS.---PLEASURES OF TASTE.---SUBLIMITY IN OBJECTS.

Taste, Criticism, and Genius, are words currently employed, without distinct ideas annexed to them. In beginning a course of Lectures where such words must often occur, it is necessary to ascertain their meaning with some precision. Having in the last Lecture treated of Taste, I proceed to explain the nature and foundation of Criticism. True Criticism is the application of Taste and of good sense to the several fine arts. The object which it proposes is, to distinguish what is beautiful and what is faulty in every performance; from particular instances to ascend to general principles; and so to form rules or conclusions concerning the several kinds of beauty in works of genius.

The rules of criticism are not formed by any induction, *à priori*, as it is called; that is, they are not formed by a train of abstract reasoning, independent of facts and observations. Criticism is an art founded wholly on experience; on the observations of such beauties as have come nearest to the standard which I before established; that is, of such beauties as have been found to please mankind most generally. For example; Aristotle's rules concerning the unity of action in dramatic and epic composition, were not rules first discovered by logical reasoning, and then applied to poetry; but they were drawn from the practice of Homer and Sophocles: they were founded upon observing the superior pleasure which we receive from the relation of an action which is one and entire, beyond what we receive from the relation of scattered and unconnected facts. Such observations taking their rise at first from feeling and experience, were found on examination to be so consonant to reason, and to the principles of human nature, as to pass into established rules, and to be conveniently applied for judging of the excellency of any performance. This is the most natural account of the origin of criticism.

A masterly genius, it is true, will of himself, untaught, compose in such a manner as shall be agreeable to the most material rules of criticism; for as these rules are founded in nature, nature will often suggest them in practice. Homer, it is more than probable, was acquainted with no systems of the art of poetry. Guided by genius alone, he composed in verse a regular story, which all posterity has admired. But this is no argument against the usefulness of criticism as an art. For as no human genius is perfect, there is no writer but may receive assistance from critical observa-

tions upon the beauties and faults of those who have gone before him. No observations or rules can indeed supply the defect of genius, or inspire it where it is wanting. But they may often direct it into its proper channel; they may correct its extravagances, and point out to it the most just and proper imitation of nature. Critical rules are designed chiefly to shew the faults that ought to be avoided. To nature we must be indebted for the production of eminent beauties.

From what has been said, we are enabled to form a judgment concerning those complaints which it has long been fashionable for petty authors to make against critics and criticism. Critics have been represented as the great abridgers of the native liberty of genius; as the imposers of unnatural shackles and bonds upon writers, from whose cruel persecution they must fly to the public, and implore its protection. Such supplicatory prefaces are not calculated to give very favourable ideas of the genius of the author. For every good writer will be pleased to have his work examined by the principles of sound understanding, and true taste. The declamations against criticism commonly proceed upon this supposition, that critics are such as judge by rule, not by feeling; which is so far from being true, that they who judge after this manner are pedants, not critics. For all the rules of genuine criticism I have shewn to be ultimately founded on feeling; and taste and feeling are necessary to guide us in the application of these rules to every particular instance. As there is nothing in which all sorts of persons more readily affect to be judges than in works of taste, there is no doubt that the number of incompetent critics will always be great. But this affords no more foundation for a general invective against criticism, than the number of bad philosophers or reasoners affords against reason and philosophy.

An objection more plausible may be formed against criticism, from the applause that some performances have received from the public, which, when accurately considered, are found to contradict the rules established by criticism. Now, according to the principles laid down in the last Lecture, the public is the supreme judge to whom the last appeal must be made in every work of taste; as the standard of taste is founded on the sentiments that are natural and common to all men. But with respect to this, we are to observe, that the sense of the public is often too hastily judged of. The genuine public taste does not always appear in the first applause given upon the publication of any new work. There are both a great vulgar and a small, apt to be catched and dazzled by very superficial beauties, the admiration of which in a little time passes away: and sometimes a writer may acquire great temporary reputation merely by his compliance with the passions or prejudices, with the party-spirit or superstitious notions, that may chance to rule

for a time almost a whole nation. In such cases, though the public may seem to praise, true criticism may with reason condemn; and it will in progress of time gain the ascendant: for the judgment of true criticism, and the voice of the public, when once become unprejudiced and dispassionate, will ever coincide at last.

Instances I admit there are of some works, that contain gross transgressions of the laws of criticism, acquiring, nevertheless, a general, and even lasting admiration. Such are the plays of Shakspeare, which, considered as dramatic poems, are irregular in the highest degree. But then we are to remark, that they have gained the public admiration, not by their being irregular, not by their transgressions of the rules of art, but in spite of such transgressions. They possess other beauties which are conformable to just rules; and the force of these beauties has been so great as to overpower all censure, and to give the public a degree of satisfaction superior to the disgust arising from their blemishes. Shakspeare pleases, not by his bringing the transactions of many years into one play; not by his grotesque mixtures of tragedy and comedy in one piece, nor by the strained thoughts, and affected witticisms, which he sometimes employs. These we consider as blemishes, and impute them to the grossness of the age in which he lived. But he pleases by his animated and masterly representations of characters, by the liveliness of his descriptions, the force of his sentiments, and his possessing, beyond all writers, the natural language of passion: beauties which true criticism no less teaches us to place in the highest rank, than nature teaches us to feel.

I proceed next to explain the meaning of another term, which there will be frequent occasion to employ in these Lectures; that is, *Genius*.

Taste and genius are two words frequently joined together; and therefore, by inaccurate thinkers, confounded. They signify however two quite different things. The difference between them can be clearly pointed out; and it is of importance to remember it. Taste consists in the power of judging; genius, in the power of executing. One may have a considerable degree of taste in poetry, eloquence, or any of the fine arts, who has little or hardly any genius for composition or execution in any of these arts; but genius cannot be found without including taste also. Genius, therefore, deserves to be considered as a higher power of the mind than taste. Genius always imports something inventive or creative; which does not rest in mere sensibility to beauty where it is perceived, but which can, moreover, produce new beauties, and exhibit them in such a manner as strongly to impress the minds of others. Refined taste forms a good critic; but genius is farther necessary to form the poet, or the orator.

It is proper also to observe, that genius is a word, which, in com-

mon acceptation, extends much farther than to the objects of taste. It is used to signify that talent or aptitude which we receive from nature, for excelling in any one thing whatever. Thus we speak of a genius for mathematics, as well as a genius for poetry; of a genius for war, for politics, or for any mechanical employment.

This talent or aptitude for excelling in some one particular, is, I have said, what we receive from nature. By art and study, no doubt, it may be greatly improved; but by them alone it cannot be acquired. As genius is a higher faculty than taste, it is ever, according to the usual frugality of nature, more limited in the sphere of its operations. It is not uncommon to meet with persons who have an excellent taste in several of the polite arts, such as music, poetry, painting, and eloquence, all together: but, to find one who is an excellent performer in all these arts, is much more rare; or rather, indeed, such a one is not to be looked for. A sort of universal genius, or one who is equally and indifferently turned towards several different professions and arts, is not likely to excel in any. Although there may be some few exceptions, yet in general it holds, that when the bent of the mind is wholly directed towards some one object, exclusive, in a manner, of others, there is the fairest prospect of eminence in that, whatever it be. The rays must converge to a point, in order to glow intensely. This remark I here choose to make, on account of its great importance to young people; in leading them to examine with care, and to pursue with ardour, the current and pointing of nature towards those exertions of genius in which they are most likely to excel.

A genius for any of the fine arts, as I before observed, always supposes taste; and it is clear, that the improvement of taste will serve both to forward and to correct the operations of genius. In proportion as the taste of a poet, or orator, becomes more refined with respect to the beauties of composition, it will certainly assist him to produce the more finished beauties in his work. Genius, however, in a poet, or orator, may sometimes exist in a higher degree than taste; that is, genius may be bold and strong, when taste is neither very delicate, nor very correct. This is often the case in the infancy of arts: a period when genius frequently exerts itself with great vigour and executes with much warmth; while taste, which requires experience, and improves by slower degrees, hath not yet attained to its full growth. Homer and Shakspeare are proofs of what I now assert; in whose admirable writings are found instances of rudeness and indelicacy, which the more refined taste of later writers, who had far inferior genius to them, would have taught them to avoid. As all human perfection is limited, this may very probably be the law of our nature, that it is not given to one man to execute with vigour and fire, and, at the same time, to attend to all the lesser and more refined graces that belong to

the exact perfection of his work: while, on the other hand, a thorough taste for those inferior graces is, for the most part, accompanied with a diminution of sublimity and force. • •

Having thus explained the nature of taste, the nature and importance of criticism, and the distinction between taste and genius; I am now to consider the sources of the Pleasures of Taste. Here opens a very extensive field; no less than all the pleasures of the imagination, as they are commonly called, whether afforded us by natural objects, or by the imitations and descriptions of them. But it is not necessary to the purpose of my Lectures that all these should be examined fully; the pleasure which we receive from discourse, or writing, being the main object of them. All that I propose is to give some openings into the pleasures of taste in general; and to insist more particularly upon sublimity and beauty.

We are far from having yet attained to any system concerning this subject. Mr. Addison was the first who attempted a regular inquiry, in his Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination, published in the sixth volume of the Spectator. He has reduced these pleasures under three heads; beauty, grandeur, and novelty. His speculations on this subject, if not exceedingly profound, are, however, very beautiful and entertaining; and he has the merit of having opened a track, which was before unbeaten. The advances made since his time in this curious part of philosophical criticism, are not very considerable, though some ingenious writers have pursued the subject. This is owing, doubtless, to that thinness and subtilty which are found to be properties of all the feelings of taste. They are engaging objects; but when we would lay firm hold of them, and subject them to a regular discussion, they are always ready to elude our grasp. It is difficult to make a full enumeration of the several objects that give pleasure to taste; it is more difficult to define all those which have been discovered, and to reduce them under proper classes; and, when we would go farther, and investigate the efficient causes of the pleasure which we receive from such objects, here, above all, we find ourselves at a loss. For instance; we all learn by experience, that certain figures of bodies appear to us more beautiful than others. On inquiring farther, we find that the regularity of some figures, and the graceful variety of others, are the foundation of the beauty which we discern in them; but when we attempt to go a step beyond this, and inquire what is the cause of regularity and variety producing in our minds the sensation of beauty, any reason we can assign is extremely imperfect. These first principles of internal sensation nature seems to have covered with an impenetrable veil.

It is some comfort, however, that although the efficient cause be obscure, the final cause of those sensations lies in many cases more open: and, in entering on this subject, we cannot avoid taking

notice of the strong impression which the powers of taste and imagination are calculated to give us of the benignity of our Creator. By endowing us with such powers, he hath widely enlarged the sphere of the pleasures of human life; and those too of a kind the most pure and innocent. The necessary purposes of life might have been abundantly answered, though our senses of seeing and hearing had only served to distinguish external objects, without conveying to us any of those refined and delicate sensations of beauty and grandeur, with which we are now so much delighted. This additional embellishment and glory, which, for promoting our entertainment, the Author of nature hath poured forth upon his works, is one striking testimony, among many others, of benevolence and goodness. This thought, which Mr. Addison first started, Dr. Akenside, in his poem on the Pleasures of the Imagination, has happily pursued.

——— Not content
With every food of life to nourish man,
By kind illusions of the wondering sense,
Thou mak'st all nature beauty to his eye,
Or music to his ear. ———

I shall begin with considering the pleasure which arises from sublimity or grandeur, of which I propose to treat at some length; both as this has a character more precise and distinctly marked than any other of the pleasures of the imagination, and as it coincides more directly with our main subject. For the greater distinctness I shall, first, treat of the grandeur or sublimity of external objects themselves, which will employ the rest of this Lecture; and, afterward, of the description of such objects, or of what is called the Sublime in Writing, which shall be the subject of a following Lecture. I distinguish these two things from one another, the grandeur of the objects themselves when they are presented to the eye, and the description of that grandeur in discourse or writing; though most critics, inaccurately I think, blend them together; and I consider grandeur and sublimity as terms synonymous, or nearly so. If there be any distinction between them, it arises from sublimity's expressing grandeur in its highest degree.*

It is not easy to describe, in words, the precise impression which great and sublime objects make upon us when we behold them, but every one has a conception of it. It produces a sort of internal elevation and expansion; it raises the mind much above its ordinary state; and fills it with a degree of wonder and astonishment, which it cannot well express. The emotion is certainly delightful; but it is altogether of the serious kind; a degree of

* See a Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. Dr. Gerard on Taste, section ii. Elements of Criticism, chap. iv.

awfulness and solemnity, even approaching to severity, commonly attends it when at its height; very distinguishable from the more gay and brisk emotion raised by beautiful objects.

The simplest form of external grandeur appears in the vast and boundless prospects presented to us by nature; such as wide extended plains, to which the eye can see no limits; the firmament of heaven; or the boundless expanse of the ocean. All vastness produces the impression of sublimity. It is to be remarked, however, that space, extended in length, makes not so strong an impression as height or depth. Though a boundless plain be a grand object, yet a high mountain, to which we look up, or an awful precipice or tower whence we look down on the objects which lie below, is still more so. The excessive grandeur of the firmament arises from its height, joined to its boundless extent; and that of the ocean, not from its extent alone, but from the perpetual motion and irresistible force of that mass of waters. Wherever space is concerned, it is clear, that amplitude or greatness of extent, in one dimension or other, is necessary to grandeur. Remove all bounds from any object, and you presently render it sublime. Hence infinite space, endless numbers, and eternal duration, fill the mind with great ideas.

From this some have imagined, that vastness, or amplitude of extent, is the foundation of all sublimity. But I cannot be of this opinion, because many objects appear sublime which have no relation to space at all. Such, for instance, is great loudness of sound. The burst of thunder or of cannon, the roaring of winds, the shouting of multitudes, the sound of vast cataracts of water, are all incontestably grand objects. 'I heard the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah.' In general we may observe, that great power and force exerted, always raise sublime ideas; and perhaps the most copious source of these is derived from this quarter. Hence the grandeur of earthquakes and burning mountains; of great conflagrations; of the stormy ocean, and overflowing waters; of tempests of wind; of thunder and lightning; and of all the uncommon violence of the elements. Nothing is more sublime than mighty power and strength. A stream that runs within its banks is a beautiful object; but when it rushes down with the impetuosity and noise of a torrent, it presently becomes a sublime one. From lions, and other animals of strength, are drawn sublime comparisons in poets. A race-horse is looked upon with pleasure; but it is the war-horse, 'whose neck is clothed with thunder,' that carries grandeur in its idea. The engagement of two great armies, as it is the highest exertion of human might, combines a variety of sources of the sublime; and has accordingly been always considered as one of the most striking and magnificent

spectacles that can either be presented to the eye, or exhibited to the imagination in description.

For the farther illustration of this subject, it is proper to remark, that all ideas of the solemn and awful kind, and even bordering on the terrible, tend greatly to assist the sublime; such as darkness, solitude, and silence. What are the scenes of nature that elevate the mind in the highest degree, and produce the sublime sensation? Not the gay landscape, the flowery field, or the flourishing city; but the hoary mountain, and the solitary lake; the aged forest, and the torrent falling over the rock. Hence, too, night-scenes are commonly the most sublime. The firmament, when filled with stars, scattered in such vast numbers, and with such magnificent profusion, strikes the imagination with a more awful grandeur, than when we view it enlightened with all the splendour of the sun. The deep sound of a great bell, or the striking of a great clock, are at any time grand; but, when heard amid the silence and stillness of the night, they become doubly so. Darkness is very commonly applied for adding sublimity to all our ideas of the Deity. 'He maketh darkness his pavilion; he dwelleth in the thick cloud.' So Milton:

——— How oft, amidst
Thick clouds and dark, does Heaven's all-ruling Sire
Choose to reside, his glory unobscured,
And, with the majesty of darkness, round
Circles his throne ——— Book ii. 263.

Observe, with how much art Virgil has introduced all those ideas of silence, vacuity, and darkness, when he is going to introduce his hero to the infernal regions, and to disclose the secrets of the great deep.

Dii quibus imperium est animarum, umbræque silentes,
Et Chaos, et Phlegethon, loca nocte silentia latè,
Sit mihi fas audita loqui: sit numine vestro
Pandere res altâ terrâ, et caligine mersas.
Ibant obscuri, solâ sub nocte, per umbram,
Perque domos Ditis vacuos, et inania regna;
Quale per incertam lunam, sub luce malignâ
Est iter in sylvis ———.*

* Ye subterranean Gods, whose awful sway
The gliding ghosts and silent shades obey;
O Chaos, hear! and Phlegethon profound!
Whose solemn empire stretches wide around!
Give me, ye great tremendous powers! to tell
Of scenes and wonders in the depths of hell;
Give me your mighty secrets to display,
From those black realms of darkness to the day.---PITT.

Obscure they went; through dreary shades, that led
Along the waste dominions of the dead;
As wander travellers in woods by night,
By the moon's doubtful and malignant light.---DRYDEN.

These passages I quote at present, not so much as instances of sublime writing, though in themselves they are truly so, as to shew, by the effect of them, that the objects which they present to us, belong to the class of sublime ones.

Obscurity, we are farther to remark, is not unfavourable to the sublime. Though it renders the object indistinct, the impression, however, may be great; for, as an ingenious author has well observed, it is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination; and the imagination may be strongly affected, and, in fact, often is so, by objects of which we have no clear conception. Thus we see, that almost all the descriptions given us of the appearances of supernatural beings, carry some sublimity, though the conceptions which they afford us be confused and indistinct. Their sublimity arises from the ideas, which they always convey, of superior power and might, joined with an awful obscurity. We may see this fully exemplified in the following noble passage of the book of Job: 'In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still; but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before my eyes; there was silence; and I heard a voice —Shall mortal man be more just than God?'* Job iv. 15. No ideas, it is plain, are so sublime as those taken from the Supreme Being; the most unknown, but the greatest of all objects; the infinity of whose nature, and the eternity of whose duration, joined with the omnipotence of his power, though they surpass our conceptions, yet exalt them to the highest. In general, all objects that are greatly raised above us, or far removed from us, either in space or in time, are apt to strike us as great. Our viewing them as through the mist of distance or antiquity, is favourable to the impressions of their sublimity.

As obscurity, so disorder too, is very compatible with grandeur; nay, frequently heightens it. Few things that are strictly regular and methodical, appear sublime. We see the limits on every side; we feel ourselves confined; there is no room for the mind's exerting any great effort. Exact proportion of parts, though it enters

* The picture which Lucretius has drawn of the dominion of superstition over mankind, representing it as a portentous spectre, shewing its head from the clouds, and dismaying the whole human race with its countenance, together with the magnanimity of Epicurus in raising himself up against it, carries all the grandeur of a sublime, obscure, and awful image.

Humana ante oculos fœde cum vita jaceret
In terris, oppressa gravi sub religione,
Quæ caput e cœli regionibus ostendebat,
Horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
Primum Graius homo mortales tollere contra
Est oculos ausus.— Lib. i.

often into the beautiful, is much disregarded in the sublime. A great mass of rocks, thrown together by the hand of nature, with wildness and confusion, strike the mind with more grandeur than if they had been adjusted to one another with the most accurate symmetry.

In the feeble attempts which human art can make towards producing grand objects (feeble I mean in comparison with the powers of nature), greatness of dimensions always constitutes a principal part. No pile of building can convey any idea of sublimity, unless it be ample and lofty. There is too in architecture what is called greatness of manner; which seems chiefly to arise from presenting the object to us in one full point of view; so that it shall make its impressien whole, entire, and undivided, upon the mind. A Gothic cathedral raises ideas of grandeur in our minds, by its size, its height, its awful obscurity, its strength, its antiquity, and its durability.

There still remains to be mentioned one class of sublime objects, which may be called the moral, or sentimental sublime; arising from certain exertions of the human mind; from certain affections, and actions, of our fellow-creatures. These will be found to be all, or chiefly, of that class, which comes under the head of magnanimity, or heroism; and they produce an effect extremely similar to what is produced by the view of grand objects in nature; filling the mind with admiration, and elevating it above itself. A noted instance of this, quoted by all the French critics, is the celebrated *Qu'il Mourut* of Corneille, in the tragedy of Horace. In the famous combat betwixt the Horatii and the Curiatii, the old Horatius, being informed that two of his sons are slain, and that the third had betaken himself to flight, at first would not believe the report; but being thoroughly assured of the fact, is fired with all the sentiments of high honour and indignation, at this supposed unworthy behaviour of his surviving son. He is reminded, that his son stood alone against three, and asked what he wished him to have done?—'To have died,'—he answers. In the same manner, Porus, taken prisoner by Alexander, after a gallant defence, and asked how he wished to be treated? answering, 'Like a king;' and Cæsar chiding the pilot who was afraid to set out with him in a storm, 'Quid times? Cæsarem vehis;' are good instances of this sentimental sublime. Wherever, in some critical and high situation, we behold a man uncommonly intrepid, and resting upon himself; superior to passion and to fear; animated by some great principle to the contempt of popular opinion, of selfish interest, of dangers, or of death; there we are struck with a sense of the sublime.*

* The sublime, in natural and moral objects, is brought before us in one view, and compared together, in the following beautiful passage of Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination:—

High virtue is the most natural and fertile source of this moral sublimity. However, on some occasions, where virtue either has no place, or is but imperfectly displayed, yet if extraordinary vigour and force of mind be discovered, we are not insensible to a degree of grandeur in the character; and from the splendid conqueror, or the daring conspirator, whom we are far from approving, we cannot with hold our admiration.*

I have now enumerated a variety of instances, both in inanimate objects and in human life, where the sublime appears. In all these instances the emotion raised in us is of the same kind, although the objects that produce the emotion be of widely different kinds. A question next arises, whether we are able to discover some one fundamental quality in which all these different objects agree, and which is the cause of their producing an emotion of the same nature in our minds? Various hypotheses have been formed concerning this; but, as far as appears to me, hitherto unsatisfactory. Some have imagined that amplitude or great extent, joined with simplicity, is either immediately, or remotely, the fundamental quality of whatever is sublime; but we have seen that amplitude is confined to one species of sublime objects; and cannot, with-

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Look then abroad through nature; to the range
Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,
Wheeling, unshaken, through the void immense;
And speak, O man! does this capacious scene,
With half that kindling majesty, dilate
Thy strong conception, as when Brutus rose
Refulgent, from the stroke of Cæsar's fate,
Amid the crowd of patriots; and his arm
Aloft extending, like eternal Jove,
When guilt brings down the thunder, call'd aloud
On Tully's name, and shook his crimson steel,
And bade the father of his country hail!
For lo! the tyrant prostrate on the dust;
And Rome again is free.— Book i.

* Silius Italicus studied to give an august idea of Hannibal, by representing him as surrounded with all his victories, in the place of guards. One who had formed a design of assassinating him in the midst of a feast, is thus addressed:

Fallit te, mensas inter quod credis inermem;
Tot bellis quæsita viro, tot cædibus, armat
Majestas æterna ducem. Si admoveris ora,
Cannas, et Trebiam ante oculos, Trasymenaque busta
Et Pauli stare ingentem miraberis umbram.

A thought somewhat of the same nature occurs in a French author. 'Il se cache; mais sa reputation le decouvre: Il marche sans suite et sans equipage; mais chacun, dans son esprit, le met sur un char de triomphe. On compte, en le voiant, les ennemis qu'il a vaincus, non pas les serviteurs qui le suivent. Tout seul qu'il est, on se figure, autour de lui, ses vertus, et ses victoires que l'accompagnent. Moins il est superbe, plus il devient vénérable.' Oraison funebre de M. de Turenne, par M. Flechier.—Both these passages are splendid, rather than sublime. In the first there is a want of justness in the thought; in the second of simplicity in the expression.

out violent straining, be applied to them all. The author of 'a Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,' to whom we are indebted for several ingenious and original thoughts upon this subject, proposes a formal theory upon this foundation; That terror is the source of the sublime, and that no objects have this character but such as produce impressions of pain and danger. It is indeed true, that many terrible objects are highly sublime; and that grandeur does not refuse an alliance with the idea of danger. But though this is very properly illustrated by the author (many of whose sentiments on that head I have adopted), yet he seems to stretch his theory too far, when he represents the sublime as consisting wholly in modes of danger, or of pain. For the proper sensation of sublimity appears to be distinguishable from the sensation of either of these; and, on several occasions, to be entirely separated from them. In many grand objects, there is no coincidence with terror at all; as in the magnificent prospect of wide-extended plains, and of the starry firmament; or in the moral dispositions and sentiments, which we view with high admiration; and in many painful and terrible objects also, it is clear, there is no sort of grandeur. The amputation of a limb, or the bite of a snake, are exceedingly terrible; but are destitute of all claim whatever to sublimity. I am inclined to think, that mighty force or power, whether accompanied with terror or not, whether employed in protecting or in alarming us, has a better title than any thing that has yet been mentioned, to be the fundamental quality of the sublime; as, after the review which we have taken, there does not occur to me any sublime object, into the idea of which, power, strength, and force, either enter not directly, or are not, at least, intimately associated with the idea, by leading our thoughts to some astonishing power, as concerned in the production of the object. However, I do not insist upon this as sufficient to found a general theory; it is enough to have given this view of the nature and different kinds of sublime objects; by which I hope to have laid a proper foundation for discussing, with greater accuracy, the sublime in writing and composition.

LECTURE IV

THE SUBLIME IN WRITING

Having treated of grandeur or sublimity, in external objects, the way seems now to be cleared, for treating with more advantage, of the description of such objects; or, of what is called the Sublime in Writing. Though I may appear to enter early on the considera-

tion of this subject; yet, as the sublime is a species of writing which depends less than any other on the artificial embellishments of rhetoric, it may be examined with as much propriety here, as in any subsequent part of the Lectures.

Many critical terms have unfortunately been employed in a sense too loose and vague, none more so than that of the sublime. Every one is acquainted with the character of Cæsar's Commentaries, and of the style in which they are written; a style remarkable pure, simple, and elegant; but the most remote from the sublime, of any of the classical authors. Yet this author has a German critic, Johannes Gulielmus Bergerus, who wrote no longer ago than the year 1720, pitched upon as the perfect model of the sublime, and has composed a quarto volume, entitled 'De naturali Pulchritudine Orationis;' the express intention of which is to shew, that Cæsar's Commentaries contain the most complete exemplification of all Longinus's rules relating to sublime writing. This I mention as a strong proof of the confused ideas which have prevailed concerning this subject. The true sense of sublime writing, undoubtedly, is such a description of objects, or exhibition of sentiments, which are in themselves of a sublime nature, as shall give us strong impressions of them. But there is another very indefinite, and therefore very improper, sense, which has been too often put upon it; when it is applied to signify any remarkable and distinguishing excellency of composition; whether it raise in us the ideas of grandeur, or those of gentleness, elegance, or any other sort of beauty. In this sense Cæsar's Commentaries may, indeed, be termed sublime, and so may many sonnets, pastorals, and love elegies, as well as Homer's Iliad. But this evidently confounds the use of words, and marks no one species, or character, of composition whatever.

I am sorry to be obliged to observe, that the sublime is too often used in this last and improper sense, by the celebrated critic Longinus, in his treatise on this subject. He sets out, indeed, with describing it in its just and proper meaning; as something that elevates the mind above itself, and fills it with high conceptions, and a noble pride. But from this view of it he frequently departs; and substitutes in the place of it, whatever, in any strain of composition, pleases highly. Thus, many of the passages which he produces as instances of the sublime, are merely elegant, without having the most distant relation to proper sublimity; witness Sappho's famous Ode, on which he descants at considerable length. He points out five sources of the sublime. The first is, boldness or grandeur in the thoughts; the second is, the pathetic; the third, the proper application of figures; the fourth, the use of tropes and beautiful expressions; the fifth, musical structure and arrangement of words. This is the plan of one who was writing

a treatise of rhetoric, or of the beauties of writing in general; not of the sublime in particular. For of these five heads, only the two first have any peculiar relation to the sublime; boldness and grandeur in the thoughts, and, in some instances, the pathetic, or strong exertions of passion; the other three, tropes, figures, and musical arrangements, have no more relation to the sublime, than to other kinds of good writing; perhaps less to the sublime than to any other species whatever; because it requires less the assistance of ornament. From this it appears, that clear and precise ideas on this head, are not to be expected from that writer. I would not, however, be understood, as if I meant, by this censure, to represent his treatise as of small value. I know no critic, ancient or modern, that discovers a more lively relish of the beauties of fine writing, than Longinus; and he has also the merit of being himself an excellent, and, in several passages, a truly sublime, writer. But as his work has been generally considered as a standard on this subject, it was incumbent on me to give my opinion concerning the benefit to be derived from it. It deserves to be consulted, not so much for distinct instruction concerning the sublime, as for excellent general ideas concerning beauty in writing.

I return now to the proper and natural idea of the sublime in composition. The foundation of it must always be laid in the nature of the object described. Unless it be such an object as, if presented to our eyes, if exhibited to us in reality, would raise ideas of that elevating, that awful and magnificent kind, which we call sublime; the description, however finely drawn, is not entitled to come under this class. This excludes all objects that are merely beautiful, gay, or elegant. In the next place, the object must not only, in itself, be sublime, but it must be set before us in such a light as is most proper to give us a clear and full impression of it; it must be described with strength, with conciseness, and simplicity. This depends, principally, upon the lively impression which the poet, or orator, has of the object which he exhibits; and upon his being deeply affected, and warmed, by the sublime idea which he would convey. If his own feeling be languid, he can never inspire us with any strong emotion. Instances, which are extremely necessary on this subject, will clearly shew the importance of all the requisites which I have just now mentioned.

It is, generally speaking, among the most ancient authors, that we are to look for the most striking instances of the sublime. I am inclined to think, that the early ages of the world, and the rude unimproved state of society, are peculiarly favourable to the strong emotions of sublimity. The genius of men is then much turned to admiration and astonishment. Meeting with many objects, to them new and strange, their imagination is kept glow-

ng, and their passions are often raised to the utmost. They think, and express themselves boldly, and without restraint. In the progress of society, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy, than to strength or sublimity.

Of all writings, ancient or modern, the Sacred Scriptures afford us the highest instances of the sublime. The descriptions of the Deity, in them, are wonderfully noble; both from the grandeur of the object, and the manner of representing it. What an assemblage, for instance, of awful and sublime ideas is presented to us, in that passage of the eighteenth Psalm, where an appearance of the Almighty is described? 'In my distress I called upon the Lord; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills were moved; because he was wroth. He bowed the heavens and came down, and darkness was under his feet; and he did ride upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters, and thick clouds of the sky.' Here, agreeably to the principles established in the last Lecture, we see, with what propriety and success the circumstances of darkness and terror are applied for heightening the sublime. So, also, the prophet Habakkuk, in a similar passage; 'He stood, and measured the earth; he beheld, and drove asunder the nations. The everlasting mountains were scattered; the perpetual hills did bow his ways are everlasting. The mountains saw thee; and they trembled. The overflowing of the water passed by. The deep uttered his voice and lifted up his hands on high.'

The noted instance, given by Longinus, from Moses, 'God said, Let there be light; and there was light;' is not liable to the censure which I passed on some of his instances, of being foreign to the subject. It belongs to the true sublime; and the sublimity of it arises from the strong conception it gives, of an exertion of power, producing its effect with the utmost speed and facility. A thought of the same kind is magnificently amplified in the following passage of Isaiah (chap. xliv. 24. 27, 28); 'Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself—that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.' There is a passage in the Psalms, which deserves to be mentioned under this head; 'God,' says the Psalmist, 'stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumults of the people.' The joining together two such grand objects, as the raging of the waters, and

the tumults of the people, between which there is so much resemblance as to form a very natural association in the fancy, and the representing them, both as subject, at one moment, to the command of God, produces a noble effect.

Homer is a poet, who, in all ages, and by all critics, has been greatly admired for sublimity; and he owes much of his grandeur to that native and unaffected simplicity which characterizes his manner. His descriptions of hosts engaging; the animation, the fire, and rapidity, which he throws into his battles, present to every reader of the Iliad, frequent instances of sublime writing. His introduction of the gods, tends often to heighten, in a high degree, the majesty of his warlike scenes. Hence Longinus bestows such high and just commendations on that passage, in the fifteenth book of the Iliad, where Neptune, when preparing to issue forth into the engagement, is described as shaking the mountains with his steps, and driving his chariot along the ocean. Minerva, arming herself for fight in the fifth book; and Apollo, in the fifteenth, leading on the Trojans, and flashing terror with his ægis on the face of the Greeks; are similar instances of great sublimity added to the description of battles, by the appearances of those celestial beings. In the twentieth book, where all the gods take part in the engagement, according as they severally favour either the Grecians or the Trojans, the poet's genius is signally displayed, and the description rises into the most awful magnificence. All nature is represented as in commotion. Jupiter thunders in the heavens; Neptune strikes the earth with his trident; the ships, the city, and the mountains shake; the earth trembles to its centre; Pluto starts from his throne, in dread lest the secrets of the infernal region should be laid open to the views of mortals. The passage is worthy of being inserted.

Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ μεθ' ὅμιλον 'Ολύμπιοι ἤλυθον ἀνδρῶν,
'Ωρτο δ' Ἔρις κρατερὴ, λαοσσόος· αὖε δ' 'Αθηνη,—
Αὖε δ' Ἄρης ἑτέρωθεν, ἐρεμνῆ λαίλαπι ἶσος,—
Ὣς τὺς αμφοτέρυς μάκαρες θεοὶ ὀτρύνοντες,
Σύμβαλον, ἐν δ' ἀυτοῖς ἔριδα ῥήγνυντο βαρεῖαν·
Δεινὸν δ' ἐβροντησε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε
Ὑψόθεν, αὐτὰρ ἔνερθε Ποσειδάων ἐτίναξε
Γαῖαν ἀπειρεσίην, ὀρέων τ' αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα.
Πάντες δ' ἐσσείοντο πόδες πολυπιδάκυ Ἴδης,
Καὶ κορυφαὶ, Τρώων τε πόλις, καὶ νῆες 'Αχαιῶν.
Ἔδδεισ·ν δ' ὑπένερθεν ἄναξ ἐνέρων, 'Αϊδωνεὺς,
Δείσας ' ἐκ θρόνυ ἆλτο, καὶ ἴαχε· μὴ οἱ ὕπερθε
Γαῖαν ·ναῤῥήξειε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων,
Οἰκία θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισι φανείη
Σμερδαλὲ, ἐυρώεντα, τά τε στυγεκσι θεοὶ περ·
Τόσσος ἄρα κτύπος ὦρτο θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνιόντων.*

ILIAD, XX. 47, &c.

* But when the powers descending swell'd the fight,
Then tumult rose, fierce rage, and pale affright;

The works of Ossian (as I have elsewhere shewn) abound with examples of the sublime. The subjects of which that author treats, and the manner in which he writes, are particularly favourable to it. He possesses all the plain and venerable manner of the ancient times. He deals in no superfluous or gaudy ornaments; but throws forth his images with a rapid conciseness, which enables them to strike the mind with the greatest force. Among poets of more polished times, we are to look for the graces of correct writing, for just proportion of parts, and skilfully-conducted narration. In the midst of smiling scenery and pleasurable themes, the gay and the beautiful will appear, undoubtedly, to more advantage. But amidst the rude scenes of nature and of society, such as Ossian describes; amidst rocks, and torrents, and whirlwinds, and battles, dwells the sublime; and naturally associates itself with that grave and solemn spirit which distinguishes the author of Fingal. 'As autumn's dark storms pour from two echoing hills, so towards each other approached the heroes. As two dark streams from high rocks meet and mix, and roar on the plain: loud, rough, and dark, in battle, met Lochlin and Inisfail; chief mixed his strokes with chief, and man with man. Steel clanging sounded on steel. Helmets are cleft on high; blood bursts, and smokes around. As the troubled noise of the ocean when roll the waves on high; as the last peal of the thunder of heaven; such is the noise of battle. The groan of the people spread over the hills. It was like the thunder of night, when the cloud burst on Cona, and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow wind.' Never were images of more awful sublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Now through the trembling shores Minerva calls,
And now she thunders from the Grecian walls.
Mars hov'ring o'er his Troy, his terror shrouds
In gloomy tempests, and a night of clouds;
Now through each Trojan heart he fury pours,
With voice divine, from Ilion's topmost towers.—
Above, the Sire of Gods his thunder rolls,
And peals on peals redoubled rend the poles.
Beneath, stern Neptune shakes the solid ground,
The forests wave, the mountains nod around;
Through all her summits tremble Ida's woods,
And from their sources boil her hundred floods.
Troy's turrets totter on the rocking plain,
And the toss'd navies beat the heaving main.
Deep in the dismal region of the dead,
Th' infernal monarch rear'd his horrid head,
Leapt from his throne, lest Neptune's arms should lay
His dark dominions open to the day;
And pour in light on Pluto's drear abodes,
Abhorr'd by men and dreadful ev'n to gods.
Such wars th' immortals wage; such horrors rend
The world's vast concave, when the gods contend. POPE

I have produced these instances, in order to demonstrate that conciseness and simplicity are essential to sublime writing. Simplicity, I place in opposition to studied and profuse ornament; and conciseness, to superfluous expression. The reason why a defect, either in conciseness or simplicity, is hurtful in a peculiar manner to the sublime, I shall endeavour to explain. The emotion occasioned in the mind by some great or noble object, raises it considerably above its ordinary pitch. A sort of enthusiasm is produced, extremely agreeable while it lasts; but from which the mind is tending every moment to fall down into its ordinary situation. Now, when an author has brought us, or is attempting to bring us, into this state, if he multiplies words unnecessarily, if he decks the sublime object which he presents to us, round and round, with glittering ornaments; nay, if he throws in any one decoration that sinks in the least below the capital image, that moment he alters the key; he relaxes the tension of the mind; the strength of the feeling is emasculated; the beautiful may remain, but the sublime is gone.—When Julius Cæsar said to the pilot who was afraid to put to sea with him in a storm, 'Quid times? Cæsarem vehis;' we are struck with the daring magnanimity of one relying with such confidence on his cause and his fortune. These few words convey every thing necessary to give us the impression full. Lucan resolved to amplify and adorn the thought. Observe how, every time he twists it round, it departs farther from the sublime, till it end at last in tumid declamation.

Sperne minas, inquit, pelagi, ventoque furenti
Trade sinum: Italiam, si, cœlo auctore, recusas,
Me, pete. Sola tibi causa hæc est justa timoris
Victorem non nôsse tuum; quem numina nunquam
Destituunt; de quo male tunc Fortuna meretur
Cum post vota venit. Medias perrumpe procellas
Tutelâ secure meâ. Cœli iste fretique
Non puppis nostræ labor est. Hanc Cæsare pressam
A fluctu defendet onus; nam proderit undis
Iste ratis:———Quid tanta strage paratur
Ignoras? quærit pelagi cœlique tumultu
Quid præstet fortuna mihi.* PHARS. v. 578.

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* But Cæsar still superior to distress,
Fearless, and confident of sure success,
Thus to the pilot loud:——The seas despise,
And the vain threat'ning of the noisy skies:
Though gods deny thee yon Ausonian strand,
Yet go, I charge you, go, at my command.
Thy ignorance alone can cause thy fears,
Thou know'st not what a freight thy vessel bears;
Thou know'st not I am he to whom 'tis given,
Never to want the care of watchful heaven.
Obedient fortune waits my humble thrall,
And, always ready, comes before I call.

On account of the great importance of simplicity and conciseness, I conceive rhyme, in English verse, to be, if not inconsistent with the sublime, at least very unfavourable to it. The constrained elegance of this kind of verse, and studied smoothness of the sounds, answering regularly to each other at the end of the line, though they be quite consistent with gentle emotions, yet weaken the native force of sublimity; besides that the superfluous words which the poet is often obliged to introduce, in order to fill up the rhyme, tend farther to enfeeble it. Homer's description of the nod of Jupiter, as shaking the heavens, has been admired in all ages, as highly sublime. Literally translated, it runs thus: 'He spoke, and bending his sable brows, gave the awful nod; while he shook the celestial locks of his immortal head, all Olympus was shaken.' Mr. Pope translates it thus:

He spoke; and awful bends his sable brows,
Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,
The stamp of fate, and sanction of a God.
High heaven with trembling the dread signal took,
And all Olympus to its centre shook.

The image is spread out, and attempted to be beautified; but it is, in truth, weakened. The third line—'The stamp of fate, and sanction of a God,' is merely expletive; and introduced for no other reason but to fill up the rhyme; for it interrupts the description, and clogs the image. For the same reason, out of mere compliance with the rhyme, Jupiter is represented as shaking his locks before he gives the nod;—'Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,' which is trifling and without meaning. Whereas, in the original, the hair of his head shaken, is the effect of his nod, and makes a happy picturesque circumstance in the description.*

The boldness, freedom, and variety of our blank verse, is infinitely more favourable than rhyme, to all kinds of sublime poetry. The fullest proof of this is afforded by Milton; an author whose genius led him eminently to the sublime. The whole first and second books of Paradise Lost, are continued instances of it. Take only for an example, the following noted description of Satan after his fall, appearing at the head of the infernal hosts:—

Let winds, and seas, loud wars at freedom wage,
And waste upon themselves their empty rage;
A stronger, mightier demon is thy friend,
Thou, and thy bark, on Cæsar's fate depend.
Thou stand'st amazed to view this dreadful scene,
And wonder'st what the Gods and Fortune mean;
But artfully their bounties thus they raise,
And from my danger arrogate new praise:
Amidst the fears of death they bid me live,
And still enhance what they are sure to give.—ROWE.

* See Webb, on the Beauties of Poetry.

——— He, above the rest,
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower: his form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess
Of glory obscured: As when the sun, new risen,
Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams; or, from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darken'd so, yet shone
Above them all, th' Archangel. ———

Here concur a variety of sources of the sublime; the principal object eminently great; a high superior nature, fallen indeed, but erecting itself against distress; the grandeur of the principal object heightened, by associating it with so noble an idea as that of the sun suffering an eclipse; this picture shaded with all those images of change and trouble, of darkness and terror, which coincide so finely with the sublime emotion; and the whole expressed in a style and versification, easy, natural, and simple, but magnificent.

I have spoken of simplicity and conciseness as essential to sublime writing. In my general description of it, I mentioned strength as another necessary requisite. The strength of description arises, in a great measure, from a simple conciseness; but it supposes also something more; namely, a proper choice of circumstances in the description, so as to exhibit the object in its full and most striking point of view. For every object has several faces, so to speak, by which it may be presented to us, according to the circumstances with which we surround it; and it will appear eminently sublime, or not, in proportion as all these circumstances are happily chosen, and of a sublime kind. Here lies the great art of the writer; and, indeed, the great difficulty of sublime description. If the description be too general, and divested of circumstances, the object appears in a faint light; it makes a feeble impression, or no impression at all, on the reader. At the same time, if any trivial or improper circumstances are mingled, the whole is degraded.

A storm or tempest, for instance, is a sublime object in nature. But, to render it sublime in description, it is not enough, either to give us mere general expressions concerning the violence of the tempest, or to describe its common vulgar effects, in overthrowing trees and houses. It must be painted with such circumstances as fill the mind with great and awful ideas. This is very happily done by Virgil, in the following passage:

Ipse Pater, mediâ nimborum in nocte, coruscâ
Fulmina molitur dextrâ; quo maxima motu
Terra tremit; fugere feræ; et mortalia corda

Per gentes humilis stravit pavor: Ille flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit.*——GEORG. i.

Every circumstance in this noble description is the production of an imagination heated and astonished with the grandeur of the object. If there be any defect, it is in the words immediately following those I have quoted; 'Ingeminant Austri, et densissimus imber;' where the transition is made too hastily, I am afraid, from the preceding sublime images, to a thick shower, and the blowing of the south wind; and shews how difficult it frequently is, to descend with grace, without seeming to fall.

The high importance of the rule which I have been now giving concerning the proper choice of circumstances, when description is meant to be sublime, seems to me not to have been sufficiently attended to. It has, however, such a foundation in nature as renders the least deflexion from it fatal. When a writer is aiming at the beautiful only, his descriptions may have improprieties in them, and yet be beautiful still. Some trivial, or misjudged, circumstances can be overlooked by the reader; they make only the difference of more or less; the gay, or pleasing emotion, which he has raised, subsists still. But the case is quite different with the sublime. There, one trifling circumstance, one mean idea, is sufficient to destroy the whole charm. This is owing to the nature of the emotion aimed at by sublime description, which admits of no mediocrity, and cannot subsist in a middle state; but must either highly transport us, or, if unsuccessful in the execution, leave us greatly disgusted, and displeased. We attempt to rise along with the writer; the imagination is awakened, and put upon the stretch; but it requires to be supported; and if, in the midst of its efforts, you desert it unexpectedly, down it comes, with a painful shock. When Milton, in his battle of the angels, describes them as tearing up the mountains, and throwing them at one another; there are, in his description, as Mr. Addison has observed, no circumstances, but what are properly sublime:—

* The Father of the Gods his glory shrouds,
Involved in tempests, and a night of clouds:
And from the middle darkness flashing out,
By fits he deals his fiery bolts about.
Earth feels the motions of her angry God,
Her entrails tremble, and her mountains nod,
And flying beasts in forests seek abode.
Deep horror seizes every human breast;
Their pride is humbled, and their fears confess'd;
While he from high his rolling thunder throws,
And fires the mountains with repeated blows;
The rocks are from their old foundations rent;
The winds redouble, and the rains augment.—DRYDEN.

From their foundations loos'ning to and fro,
They pluck the seated hills, with all their load,
Rocks, waters, woods; and by the shaggy tops
Uplifting, bore them in their hands.——

Whereas Claudian, in a fragment upon the wars of the giants, has contrived to render this idea of their throwing the mountains, which is in itself so grand, burlesque and ridiculous; by this single circumstance, of one of his giants with the mountain Ida upon his shoulders, and a river, which flowed from the mountain, running down along the giant's back, as he held it up in that posture. There is a description too in Virgil, which I think is censurable, though more slightly, in this respect. It is that of the burning mountain Ætna; a subject certainly very proper to be worked up by the poet into a sublime description:

—— Horrificis juxta tonat Ætna ruinis;
Interdumque atram prorumpit ad æthera nubem,
Turbine fumantem piceo, et candente favillâ;
Attollitque globos flammarum, et sidera lambit.
Interdum scopulos, avulsaque viscera montis
Erigit eructans, liquefactaque saxa sub auras
Cum gemitu glomerat fundoque exæstuat imo.*—Æn. iii. 571.

Here, after several magnificent images, the poet concludes with personifying the mountain under this figure, 'eructans viscera cum gemitu,' belching up its bowels with a groan; which, by likening the mountain to a sick, or drunk, person, degrades the majesty of the description. It is to no purpose to tell us, that the poet here alludes to the fable of the giant Enceladus lying under mount Ætna; and that he supposes his motions and tossings to have occasioned the fiery eruptions. He intended the description of a sublime object; and the natural ideas raised by a burning mountain are infinitely more lofty than the belchings of any giant, how huge soever. The debasing effect of the idea which is here presented, will appear in a stronger light, by seeing what figure it makes in a poem of Sir Richard Blackmore's, who, through a monstrous perversity of taste, had chosen this for the capital circumstance in his description, and thereby (as Dr. Arbuthnot humorously observes, in his Treatise on the Art of Sinking) had represented the mountain as in a fit of the cholic:—

* The port capacious, and secure from wind,
Is to the foot of thund'ring Ætna join'd;
By turns a pitchy cloud she rolls on high,
By turns hot embers from her entrails fly,
And flakes of mounting flames that lick the sky.
Oft from her bowels massy rocks are thrown,
And shiver'd by the force, come piece-meal down:
Oft liquid lakes of burning sulphur flow,
Fed from the fiery springs that boil below. DRYDEN.

In this translation of Dryden's, the debasing circumstance to which I object in the original, is, with propriety, omitted.

Ætna, and all the burning mountains, find
Their kindled stores with inbred storms of wind
Blown up to rage, and roaring out, complain,
As torn with inward gripes and torturing pain;
Labouring, they cast their dreadful vomit round,
And with their melted bowels spread the ground.

Such instances shew how much the sublime depends upon a just selection of circumstances; and with how great care every circumstance must be avoided, which, by bordering in the least upon the mean, or even upon the gay or the trifling, alters the tone of the emotion.

If it shall now be inquired, what are the proper sources of the sublime? my answer is, that they are to be looked for every where in nature. It is not by hunting after tropes and figures, and rhetorical assistances, that we can expect to produce it. No: it stands clear for the most part of these laboured refinements of art. It must come unsought, if it comes at all; and be the natural offspring of a strong imagination.

Est Deus in nobis; agitante calescimus illo.

Wherever a great and awful object is presented in nature, or a very magnanimous and exalted affection of the human mind is displayed; thence, if you can catch the impression strongly, and exhibit it warm and glowing, you may draw the sublime. These are its only proper sources. In judging of any striking beauty in composition, whether it is, or is not, to be referred to this class, we must attend to the nature of the emotion which it raises; and only, if it be of that elevating, solemn, and awful kind, which distinguishes this feeling, we can pronounce it sublime.

From the account which I have given of the nature of the sublime, it clearly follows, that it is an emotion which can never be long protracted. The mind, by no force of genius, can be kept, for any considerable time, so far raised above its common tone; but will, of course, relax into its ordinary situation. Neither are the abilities of any human writer sufficient to furnish a long continuation of uninterrupted sublime ideas. The utmost we can expect is, that this fire of imagination should sometimes flash upon us like lightning from heaven, and then disappear. In Homer and Milton, this effulgence of genius breaks forth more frequently, and with greater lustre, than in most authors. Shakspeare also rises often into the true sublime. But no author whatever is sublime throughout. Some, indeed, there are, who, by a strength and dignity in their conceptions, and a current of high ideas that runs through their whole composition, preserve the reader's mind always in a tone nearly allied to the sublime; for which reason they may, in a limited sense, merit the name of continued sublime writers; and in this class we may justly place Demosthenes and Plato.

As for what is called the sublime style, it is, for the most part, a very bad one; and has no relation whatever to the real sublime. Persons are apt to imagine, that magnificent words, accumulated epithets, and a certain swelling kind of expression, by rising above what is usual or vulgar, contributes to, or even forms, the sublime. Nothing can be more false. In all the instances of sublime writing, which I have given, nothing of this kind appears. 'God said, Let there be light, and there was light.' This is striking and sublime. But put it into what is commonly called the sublime style: 'The Sovereign Arbiter of nature, by the potent energy of a single word, commanded the light to exist;' and, as Boileau has well observed, the style indeed is raised, but the thought is fallen. In general, in all good writing, the sublime lies in the thought, not in the words; and when the thought is truly noble, it will, for the most part, clothe itself in a native dignity of language. The sublime, indeed, rejects mean, low, or trivial expressions; but it is equally an enemy to such as are turgid. The main secret of being sublime, is to say great things in few and plain words. It will be found to hold, without exception, that the most sublime authors are the simplest in their style; and wherever you find a writer, who affects a more than ordinary pomp and parade of words, and is always endeavouring to magnify his subject by epithets, there you may immediately suspect, that, feeble in sentiment, he is studying to support himself by mere expression.

The same unfavourable judgment we must pass on all that laboured apparatus with which some writers introduce a passage, or description, which they intend shall be sublime; calling on their readers to attend, invoking their muse, or breaking forth into general, unmeaning, exclamations, concerning the greatness, terribleness, or majesty of the object, which they are to describe. Mr. Addison, in his Campaign, has fallen into an error of this kind, when about to describe the battle of Blenheim:

> But O! my Muse, what numbers wilt thou find
> To sing the furious troops in battle join'd?
> Methinks, I hear the drums tumultuous sound,
> The victor's shouts, and dying groans confound; &c.

Introductions of this kind, are a forced attempt in a writer to spur up himself, and his reader, when he finds his imagination begin to flag. It is like taking artificial spirits in order to supply the want of such as are natural. By this observation, however, I do not mean to pass a general censure on Mr. Addison's Campaign, which, in several places, is far from wanting merit; and, in particular, the noted comparison of his hero to the angel who rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm, is a truly sublime image.

The faults opposite to the sublime are chiefly two; the frigid, and the bombast. The frigid consists, in degrading an object, or

sentiment, which is sublime in itself, by our mean conception of it; or by our weak, low, and childish description of it. This betrays entire absence, or at least great poverty, of genius. Of this there are abundance of examples, and these commented upon with much humour, in the treatise on the Art of Sinking, in Dean Swift's works; the instances taken chiefly from Sir Richard Blackmore. One of these I had occasion already to give, in relation to Mount Ætna, and it were needless to produce any more.—The bombast lies, in forcing an ordinary or trivial object out of its rank, and endeavouring to raise it into the sublime; or, in attempting to exalt a sublime object beyond all natural and reasonable bounds. Into this error, which is but too common, writers of genius may sometimes fall, by unluckily losing sight of the true point of the sublime. This is also called fustian, or rant. Shakspeare, a great but incorrect genius, is not unexceptionable here. Dryden and Lee, in their tragedies, abound with it.

Thus far of the sublime; of which I have treated fully, because it is so capital an excellency in fine writing, and because clear and precise ideas on this head are, as far as I know, not to be met with in critical writers.

Before I conclude this Lecture, there is one observation which I choose to make at this time; I shall make it once for all, and hope it will be afterward remembered. It is with respect to the instances of faults, or rather blemishes and imperfections, which, as I have done in this Lecture, I shall hereafter continue to take, when I can, from writers of reputation. I have not the least intention thereby to disparage their character in the general. I shall have other occasions of doing equal justice to their beauties. But it is no reflection on any human performance, that it is not absolutely perfect. The task would be much easier for me, to collect instances of faults from bad writers. But they would draw no attention, when quoted from books which nobody reads. And I conceive, that the method which I follow, will contribute more to make the best authors be read with pleasure, when one properly distinguishes their beauties from their faults; and is led to imitate and admire only what is worthy of imitation and admiration.

LECTURE V.

BEAUTY, AND OTHER PLEASURES OF TASTE.

As sublimity constitutes a particular character of composition, and forms one of the highest excellences of eloquence and of poetry, it was proper to treat of it at some length. It will not be necessary to discuss so particularly all the other pleasures that

arise from taste, as some of them have less relation to our main subject. On beauty only I shall make several observations, both as the subject is curious, and as it tends to improve taste, and to discover the foundation of several of the graces of description and of poetry.*

Beauty, next to sublimity, affords, beyond doubt, the highest pleasure to the imagination. The emotion which it raises, is very distinguishable from that of sublimity. It is of a calmer kind; more gentle and soothing; does not elevate the mind so much, but produces an agreeable serenity. Sublimity raises a feeling, too violent, as I shewed, to be lasting; the pleasure arising from beauty admits of longer continuance. It extends also to a much greater variety of objects than sublimity; to a variety indeed so great, that the feelings which beautiful objects produce, differ considerably, not in degree only, but also in kind, from one another. Hence, no word in the language is used in a more vague signification than beauty. It is applied to almost every external object that pleases the eye, or the ear; to a great number of the graces of writing; to many dispositions of the mind; nay, to several objects of mere abstract science. We talk currently of a beautiful tree or flower; a beautiful poem; a beautiful character; and a beautiful theorem in mathematics.

Hence we may easily perceive, that among so great a variety of objects, to find out some one quality in which they all agree, and which is the foundation of that agreeable sensation they all raise, must be a very difficult, if not, more probably, a vain attempt. Objects, denominated beautiful, are so different, as to please, not in virtue of any one quality common to them all, but by means of several different principles in human nature. The agreeable emotion which they all raise, is somewhat of the same nature; and, therefore, has the common name of beauty given to it; but it is raised by different causes.

Hypotheses, however, have been framed by ingenious men, for assigning the fundamental quality of beauty in all objects. In particular, uniformity amidst variety, has been insisted on as this fundamental quality. For the beauty of many figures, I admit that this accounts in a satisfactory manner. But when we endeavour to apply this principle to beautiful objects of some other kind, as to colour, for instance, or motion, we shall soon find that it has no place. And even in external figured objects, it does not hold that their beauty is in proportion to their mixture of variety with uniformity; seeing many please us as highly beautiful, which have

* See Hutchinson's Inquiry concerning Beauty and Virtue.—Gerard on Taste, chap. iii.—Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful.—Elements of Criticism, chap. iii.—Spectator, vol. vi.—Essay on the Pleasures of Taste.

almost no variety at all; and others, which are various to a degree of intricacy. Laying systems of this kind, therefore, aside, what I now propose is, to give an enumeration of several of those classes of objects in which beauty most remarkably appears; and to point out, as far as I can, the separate principles of beauty in each of them.

Colour affords, perhaps, the simplest instance of beauty, and therefore the fittest to begin with. Here, neither variety, nor uniformity, nor any other principle that I know, can be assigned, as the foundation of beauty. We can refer it to no other cause but the structure of the eye, which determines us to receive certain modifications of the rays of light with more pleasure than others. And we see accordingly, that, as the organ of sensation varies in different persons, they have their different favourite colours. It is probable, that association of ideas has influence, in some cases, on the pleasure which we receive from colours. Green, for instance, may appear more beautiful, by being connected in our ideas with rural prospects and scenes; white, with innocence; blue, with the serenity of the sky. Independent of associations of this kind, all that we can farther observe concerning colours is, that those chosen for beauty are, generally, delicate, rather than glaring. Such are those paintings with which nature hath ornamented some of her works, and which art strives in vain to imitate; as the feathers of several kinds of birds, the leaves of flowers, and the fine variation of colours exhibited by the sky at the rising and setting of the sun. These present to us the highest instances of the beauty of colouring; and have accordingly been the favourite subjects of poetical description in all countries.

From colour we proceed to figure, which opens to us forms of beauty more complex and diversified. Regularity first occurs to be noticed as a source of beauty. By a regular figure, is meant, one which we perceive to be formed according to some certain rule, and not left arbitrary, or loose, in the construction of its parts. Thus, a circle, a square, a triangle, or a hexagon, please the eye, by their regularity, as beautiful figures. We must not, however, conclude, that all figures please in proportion to their regularity; or that regularity is the sole, or the chief foundation of beauty in figure. On the contrary, a certain graceful variety is found to be a much more powerful principle of beauty; and is therefore studied a great deal more than regularity, in all works that are designed merely to please the eye. I am, indeed, inclined to think, that regularity appears beautiful to us, chiefly, if not only, on account of its suggesting the ideas of fitness, propriety, and use, which have always a greater connexion with orderly and proportioned forms, than with those which appear not constructed according to any certain rule. It is clear that nature, who is undoubtedly the most grace-

ful artist, hath, in all her ornamental works, pursued variety, with an apparent neglect of regularity. Cabinets, doors, and windows, are made after a regular form, in cubes and parallelograms, with exact proportion of parts; and by being so formed they please the eye: for this good reason, that, being works of use, they are, by such figures, the better suited to the ends for which they were designed. But plants, flowers and leaves are full of variety and diversity. A straight canal is an insipid figure, in comparison of the meanders of rivers. Cones and pyramids are beautiful; but trees growing in their natural wildness, are infinitely more beautiful than when trimmed into pyramids and cones. The apartments of a house must be regular in their disposition, for the conveniency of its inhabitants; but a garden, which is designed merely for beauty, would be exceedingly disgusting, if it had as much uniformity and order in its parts as a dwelling-house.

Mr. Hogarth, in his Analysis of Beauty, has observed, that figures bounded by curve lines are, in general, more beautiful than those bounded by straight lines and angles. He pitches upon two lines, on which, according to him, the beauty of figure principally depends; and he has illustrated and supported his doctrine, by a surprising number of instances. The one is the waving line, or a curve, bending backwards and forwards, somewhat in the form of the letter S. This he calls the line of beauty; and shews how often it is found in shells, flowers, and such other ornamental works of nature; as is common also in the figures designed by painters and sculptors, for the purpose of decoration. The other line, which he calls the line of grace, is the former waving curve, twisted round some solid body. The curling worm of a common jack is one of the instances he gives of it. Twisted pillars, and twisted horns, also exhibit it. In all the instances which he mentions, variety plainly appears to be so material a principle of beauty, that he seems not to err much when he defines the art of drawing pleasing forms, to be the art of varying well. For the curve line, so much the favourite of painters, derives, according to him, its chief advantage, from its perpetual bending and variation from the stiff regularity of the straight line.

Motion furnishes another source of beauty, distinct from figure. Motion of itself is pleasing; and bodies in motion are 'cæteris paribus,' preferred to those in rest. It is, however, only gentle motion that belongs to the beautiful; for, when it is very swift or very forcible, such as that of a torrent, it partakes of the sublime. The motion of a bird gliding through the air is extremely beautiful; the swiftness with which lightning darts through the heavens is magnificent and astonishing. And here it is proper to observe, that the sensations of sublime and beautiful are not always distinguished by very distant boundaries; but are capable, in several

instances, of approaching towards each other. Thus, a smooth running stream is one of the most beautiful objects in nature: as it swells gradually into a great river, the beautiful, by degrees, is lost in the sublime. A young tree is a beautiful object; a spreading ancient oak, is a venerable and a grand one. The calmness of a fine morning is beautiful; the universal stillness of the evening is highly sublime. But to return to the beauty of motion, it will be found, I think, to hold very generally, that motion in a straight line is not so beautiful as in an undulating waving direction; and motion upwards is, commonly too, more agreeable than motion downwards. The easy curling motion of flame and smoke may be instanced, as an object singularly agreeable; and here Mr. Hogarth's waving line recurs upon us as a principle of beauty. That artist observes, very ingeniously, that all the common and necessary motions for the business of life are performed by men in straight or plain lines; but that all the graceful and ornamental movements are made in waving lines; an observation not unworthy of being attended to, by all who study the grace of gesture and action.

Though colour, figure, and motion, be separate principles of beauty; yet in many beautiful objects they all meet, and thereby render the beauty both greater and more complex. Thus, in flowers, trees, animals, we are entertained at once with the delicacy of the colour, with the gracefulness of the figure, and sometimes also with the motion of the object. Although each of these produce a separate agreeable sensation, yet they are of such a similar nature, as readily to mix and blend in one general perception of beauty, which we ascribe to the whole object as its cause: for beauty is always conceived by us as something residing in the object which raises the pleasant sensation; a sort of glory which dwells upon, and invests, it. Perhaps the most complete assemblage of beautiful objects that can any where be found, is presented by a rich natural landscape, where there is a sufficient variety of objects: fields in verdure, scattered trees and flowers, running water, and animals grazing. If to these be joined some of the productions of art which suit such a scene, as a bridge with arches over a river, smoke rising from cottages in the midst of trees, and the distant view of a fine building seen by the rising sun; we then enjoy, in the highest perfection, that gay, cheerful, and placid sensation which characterizes beauty. To have an eye and a taste formed for catching the peculiar beauties of such scenes as these, is a necessary requisite for all who attempt poetical description.

The beauty of the human countenance is more complex than any that we have yet considered. It includes the beauty of colour, arising from the delicate shades of the complexion; and the beauty of figure, arising from the lines which form the different features of

the face. But the chief beauty of the countenance depends upon a mysterious expression, which it conveys of the qualities of the mind; of good sense, of good humour; of sprightliness, candour, benevolence, sensibility, or other amiable dispositions. How it comes to pass, that a certain conformation of features is connected in our idea with certain moral qualities; whether we are taught by instinct, or by experience, to form this connexion, and to read the mind in the countenance; belongs not to us now to inquire, nor is indeed easy to resolve. The fact is certain, and acknowledged, that what gives the human countenance its most distinguishing beauty, is what is called its expression; or an image, which it is conceived to shew of internal moral dispositions.

This leads us to observe, that there are certain qualities of the mind, which, whether expressed in the countenance, or by words, or by actions, always raise in us a feeling similar to that of beauty. There are two great classes of moral qualities; one is of the high and the great virtues, which require extraordinary efforts, and turn upon dangers and sufferings; as heroism, magnanimity, contempt of pleasures, and contempt of death. These, as I have observed in a former Lecture, excite in the spectator an emotion of sublimity and grandeur. The other class is generally of the social virtues, and such as are of a softer and gentler kind; as compassion, mildness, friendship, and generosity. These raise in the beholder a sensation of pleasure, so much akin to that produced by beautiful external objects, that, though of a more dignified nature, it may, without impropriety, be classed under the same head.

A species of beauty, distinct from any I have yet mentioned, arises from design or art; or, in other words, from the perception of means being adapted to an end; or the parts of any thing being well fitted to answer the design of the whole. When in considering the structure of a tree or a plant, we observe how all the parts, the roots, the stem, the bark, and the leaves, are suited to the growth and nutriment of the whole; much more when we survey all the parts and members of a living animal; or when we examine any of the curious works of art; such as a clock, a ship, or any nice machine; the pleasure which we have in the survey, is wholly founded on this sense of beauty. It is altogether different from the perception of beauty produced by colour, figure, variety, or any of the causes formerly mentioned. When I look at a watch, for instance, the case of it, if finely engraved, and of curious workmanship, strikes me as beautiful in the former sense; bright colour, exquisite polish, figures finely raised and turned. But when I examine the spring and the wheels, and praise the beauty of the internal machinery; my pleasure then arises wholly from the view of that admirable art with which so many various and complicated parts are made to unite for one purpose.

This sense of beauty, in fitness and design, has an extensive influence over many of our ideas. It is the foundation of the beauty which we discover in the proportion of doors, windows, arches, pillars, and all the orders of architecture. Let the ornaments of a building be ever so fine and elegant in themselves, yet if they interfere with this sense of fitness and design, they lose their beauty, and hurt the eye like disagreeable objects. Twisted columns, for instance, are undoubtedly ornamental; but as they have an appearance of weakness, they always displease when they are made use of to support any part of a building that is massy, and that seems to require a more substantial prop. We cannot look upon any work whatever, without being led, by a natural association of ideas, to think of its end and design, and of course to examine the propriety of its parts, in relation to this design and end. When their propriety is clearly discerned, the work seems always to have some beauty; but when there is a total want of propriety, it never fails of appearing deformed. Our sense of fitness and design, therefore, is so powerful, and holds so high a rank among our perceptions, as to regulate, in a great measure, our other ideas of beauty: an observation which I the rather make, as it is of the utmost importance, that all who study composition should carefully attend to it. For in an epic poem, a history, an oration, or any work of genius, we always require, as we do in other works, a fitness, or adjustment of means, to the end which the author is supposed to have in view. Let his descriptions be ever so rich, or his figures ever so elegant, yet if they are out of place, if they are not proper parts of that whole, if they suit not the main design, they lose all their beauty; nay, from beauties they are converted into deformities. Such power has our sense of fitness and congruity, to produce a total transformation of an object whose appearance otherwise would have been beautiful.

After having mentioned so many various species of beauty, it now only remains to take notice of beauty as it is applied to writing or discourse; a term commonly used in a sense altogether loose and undetermined. For it is applied to all that pleases, either in style or in sentiment, from whatever principle that pleasure flows; and a beautiful poem or oration means, in common language, no other than a good one, or one well composed. In this sense, it is plain, the word is altogether indefinite, and points at no particular species or kind of beauty. There is, however, another sense, somewhat more definite, in which beauty of writing characterizes a particular manner; when it is used to signify a certain grace and amenity, in the turn either of style or sentiment, for which some authors have been peculiarly distinguished. In this sense, it denotes a manner neither remarkably sublime, nor vehemently passionate, nor uncommonly sparkling; but such as raises in the

reader an emotion of the gentle placid kind, similar to what is raised by the contemplation of beautiful objects in nature; which neither lifts the mind very high, nor agitates it very much, but diffuses over the imagination an agreeable and pleasing serenity. Mr. Addison is a writer altogether of this character; and is one of the most proper and precise examples that can be given of it. Fenelon, the author of the Adventures of Telemachus, may be given as another example. Virgil too, though very capable of rising on occasions into the sublime, yet, in his general manner, is distinguished by the character of beauty and grace, rather than of sublimity. Among orators, Cicero has more of the beautiful than Demosthenes, whose genius led him wholly towards vehemence and strength.

This much it is sufficient to have said upon the subject of beauty. We have traced it through a variety of forms; as next to sublimity, it is the most copious source of the pleasures of taste; and as the consideration of the different appearances, and principles of beauty, tends to the improvement of taste in many subjects.

But it is not only by appearing under the forms of sublime or beautiful, that objects delight the imagination. From several other principles, also, they derive their power of giving it pleasure.

Novelty, for instance, has been mentioned by Mr. Addison, and by every writer on this subject. An object which has no merit to recommend it, except its being uncommon or new, by means of this quality alone, produces in the mind a vivid and an agreeable emotion. Hence that passion of curiosity, which prevails so generally among mankind. Objects and ideas which have been long familiar, make too faint an impression to give an agreeable exercise to our faculties. New and strange objects rouse the mind from its dormant state, by giving it a quick and pleasing impulse. Hence, in a great measure, the entertainment afforded us by fiction and romance. The emotion raised by novelty is of a more lively and pungent nature than that produced by beauty; much shorter in its continuance. For if the object have in itself no charms to hold our attention, the shining gloss thrown upon it by novelty soon wears off.

Besides novelty, imitation is another source of pleasure to taste. This gives rise, to what Mr. Addison terms, the secondary pleasures of imagination; which form, doubtless, a very extensive class. For all imitation affords some pleasure; not only the imitation of beautiful or great objects, by recalling the original ideas of beauty or grandeur which such objects themselves exhibited; but even objects which have neither beauty nor grandeur, nay, some which are terrible or deformed, please us in a secondary or represented view.

The pleasures of melody and harmony belong also to taste. There is no agreeable sensation we receive either from beauty or sublimity, but what is capable of being heightened by the power

of musical sound. Hence the delight of poetical numbers; and even of the more concealed and looser measures of prose. Wit, humour, and ridicule, likewise open a variety of pleasures to taste, quite distinct from any that we have yet considered.

At present it is not necessary to pursue any farther the subject of the pleasures of taste. I have opened some of the general principles; it is time now to make the application to our chief subject. If the question be put, To what class of those pleasures of taste which I have enumerated, that pleasure is to be referred, which we receive from poetry, eloquence, or fine writing? my answer is, Not to any one, but to them all. This singular advantage writing and discourse possess, that they encompass so large and rich a field on all sides, and have power to exhibit, in great perfection, not a single set of objects only, but almost the whole of those which give pleasure to taste and imitation: whether that pleasure arise from sublimity, from beauty in its different forms, from design and art, from moral sentiment, from novelty, from harmony, from wit, humour, and ridicule. To whichsoever of these the peculiar bent of a person's taste lies, from some writer or other he has it always in his power to receive the gratification of it.

Now this high power which eloquence and poetry possess, of supplying taste and imagination with such a wide circle of pleasures, they derive altogether from their having a greater capacity of imitation and description than is possessed by any other art. Of all the means which human ingenuity has contrived for recalling the images of real objects, and awakening, by representation, similar emotions to those which are raised by the original, none is so full and extensive as that which is executed by words and writing. Through the assistance of this happy invention, there is nothing, either in the natural or moral world, but what can be represented and set before the mind, in colours very strong and lively. Hence it is usual among critical writers to speak of discourse as the chief of all the imitative or mimetic arts; they compare it with painting and with sculpture, and in many respects prefer it justly before them.

This style was first introduced by Aristotle in his Poetics; and, since his time, has acquired a general currency among modern authors. But, as it is of consequence to introduce as much precision as possible into critical language, I must observe, that this manner of speaking is not accurate. Neither discourse in general, nor poetry in particular, can be called altogether imitative arts. We must distinguish betwixt imitation and description, which are ideas that should not be confounded. Imitation is performed by means of somewhat that has a natural likeness and resemblance to the thing imitated; and of consequence is understood by all; such are statues and pictures. Description, again, is the raising in the

mind the conception of an object by means of some arbitrary or instituted symbols, understood only by those who agree in the institution of them; such are words and writing. Words have no natural resemblance to the ideas or objects which they are employed to signify; but a statue or picture has a natural likeness to the original. And therefore, imitation and description differ considerably in their nature from each other.

As far, indeed, as a poet introduces into his work persons actually speaking; and, by the words which he puts into their mouths, represents the discourse which they might be supposed to hold; so far his art may more accurately be called imitative: and this is the case in all dramatic composition. But, in narrative or descriptive works, it can with no propriety be called so. Who, for instance, would call Virgil's description of a tempest, in the first Æneid, an imitation of a storm? If we heard of the imitation of a battle we might naturally think of some mock-fight, or representation of a battle on the stage, but would never apprehend that it meant one of Homer's descriptions in the Iliad. I admit, at the same time, that imitation and description agree in their principal effect, of recalling, by external signs, the ideas of things which we do not see. But though in this they coincide, yet it should not be forgotten, that the terms themselves are not synonymous; that they import different means of effecting the same end; and of course make different impressions on the mind.*

Whether we consider poetry in particular, and discourse in general, as imitative or descriptive; it is evident, that their whole

* Though in the execution of particular parts, poetry is certainly descriptive rather than imitative, yet there is a qualified sense, in which poetry, in the general, may be termed an imitative art. The subject of the poet (as Dr. Gerard has shewn in the Appendix to his Essay on Taste) is intended to be an imitation, not of things really existing, but of the course of nature; that is, a feigned representation of such events, or such scenes, as, though they never had a being, yet might have existed; and which, therefore, by their probability, bear a resemblance to nature. It was probably in this sense that Aristotle termed poetry a mimetic art. How far either the imitation or the description which poetry employs, is superior to the imitative powers of painting and music, is well shewn by Mr. Harris, in his Treatise on Music, Painting, and Poetry. The chief advantage which poetry, or discourse in general, enjoys, is that whereas, by the nature of his art, the painter is confined to the representation of a single moment, writing and discourse can trace a transaction through its whole progress. That moment, indeed, which the painter pitches upon for the subject of his picture, he may be said to exhibit with more advantage than the poet or the orator; inasmuch as he sets before us, in one view, all the minute concurrent circumstances of the event which happens in one individual point of time, as they appear in nature; while discourse is obliged to exhibit them in succession, and by means of a detail, which is in danger of becoming tedious, in order to be clear; or, if not tedious, is in danger of being obscure. But to that point of time which he has chosen, the painter being entirely confined, he cannot exhibit various stages of the same action or event; and he is subject to this farther defect, that he can only exhibit objects as they appear to the eye, and can very imperfectly delineate characters and sentiments, which are the noblest subjects of imitation or description. The power of representing these with full advantage, gives a high superiority to discourse and writing above all other imitative arts.

power in recalling the impressions of real objects, is derived from the significancy of words. As their excellency flows altogether from this source, we must, in order to make way for farther inquiries, begin at the fountain head. I shall, therefore, in the next Lecture, enter upon the consideration of Language: of the origin, the progress, and construction of which I purpose to treat at some length.

LECTURE VI.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE.

Having finished my observations on the pleasures of taste, which were meant to be introductory to the principal subject of these Lectures, I now begin to treat of language; which is the foundation of the whole power of eloquence. This will lead to a considerable discussion; and there are few subjects belonging to polite literature which more merit such a discussion. I shall first give a history of the rise and progress of language in several particulars, from its early to its more advanced periods; which shall be followed by a similar history of the rise and progress of writing. I shall next give some account of the construction of language, or the principles of universal grammar; and shall, lastly, apply these observations more particularly to the English tongue.*

Language, in general, signifies the expression of our ideas by certain articulate sounds, which are used as the signs of those ideas. By articulate sounds are meant those modulations of simple voice, or of sound emitted from the thorax, which are formed by means of the mouth and its several organs, the teeth, the tongue, the lips, and the palate. How far there is any natural connexion between the ideas of the mind and the sounds emitted, will appear from what I have afterward to offer. But as the natural connexion can, upon any system, affect only a small part of the fabric of language; the connexion between words and ideas may, in general, be considered as arbitrary and conventional, owing to the agreement of men among themselves; the clear proof of which is, that different nations have different languages, or a different set of articulate sounds, which they have chosen for communicating their ideas.

This artificial method of communicating thought we now behold

* See Dr. Adam Smith's Dissertation on the Formation of Languages.—Treatise of the Origin and Progress of Language, in 3 vols.---Harris's Hermes, or a Philosophical Inquiry concerning Language and Universal Grammar.---Essai sur l'Origine des Connoissances Humaines, par l'Abbé Condillac.---Principes de Grammaire, par Marsais.---Grammaire Generale et Raisonée.---Traité de la Formation Mechanique des Langues, par le President de Brosses.---Discours sur l'Inegalité parmi les Hommes, par Rousseau.---Grammaire Generale, par Beauzee.---Principes de la Traduction, par Batteux.---Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses, vol. iii.---Sanctii Minerva, cum notis Perizonii.---Les Vrais Principes de la Langue Françoise, par l'Abbé Girard.

carried to the highest perfection. Language is become a vehicle, by which the most delicate and refined emotions of one mind can be transmitted, or, if we may so speak, transfused into another. Not only are names given to all objects around us, by which means an easy and speedy intercourse is carried on for providing the necessaries of life, but all the relations and differences among these objects are minutely marked, the invisible sentiments of the mind are described, the most abstract notions and conceptions are rendered intelligible; and all the ideas which science can discover, or imagination create, are known by their proper names. Nay, language has been carried so far, as to be made an instrument of the most refined luxury. Not resting in mere perspicuity, we require ornament also; not satisfied with having the conceptions of others made known to us, we make a farther demand, to have them so decked and adorned as to entertain our fancy; and this demand, it is found very possible to gratify. In this state we now find language. In this state it has been found among many nations for some thousand years. The object is become familiar; and, like the expanse of the firmament, and other great objects, which we are accustomed to behold, we behold it without wonder.

But carry your thoughts back to the first dawn of language among men. Reflect upon the feeble beginnings from which it must have arisen, and upon the many and great obstacles which it must have encountered in its progress; and you will find reason for the highest astonishment on viewing the height which it has now attained. We admire several of the inventions of art; we plume ourselves on some discoveries which have been made in latter ages, serving to advance knowledge, and to render life comfortable; we speak of them as the boast of human reason. But certainly no invention is entitled to any such degree of admiration as that of language; which, too, must have been the product of the first and rudest ages, if indeed it can be considered as a human invention at all.

Think of the circumstances of mankind when languages began to be formed. They were a wandering scattered race; no society among them except families; and the family society too very imperfect, as their method of living by hunting or pasturage must have separated them frequently from one another. In this situation, when so much divided, and their intercourse so rare, how could any one set of sounds, or words, be generally agreed on as the signs of their ideas: supposing that a few, whom chance or necessity threw together, agreed by some means, under certain signs, yet by what authority could these be propagated among other tribes or families, so as to spread and grow up into a language? One would think, that, in order to any language fixing and extending itself, men must have been previously gathered together in consider-

able numbers; society must have been already far advanced; and yet, on the other hand, there seems to have been an absolute necessity for speech, previous to the formation of society. For, by what bond could any multitude of men be kept together, or be made to join in the prosecution of any common interest, until once, by the intervention of speech, they could communicate their wants and intentions to one another? So that, either how society could form itself previously to language, or how words could rise into a language previously to society formed, seem to be points attended with equal difficulty. And when we consider farther, that curious analogy which prevails in the construction of almost all languages, and that deep and subtile logic on which they are founded, difficulties increase so much upon us, on all hands, that there seems to be no small reason for referring the first origin of all language to divine teaching or inspiration.

But supposing language to have a divine original, we cannot, however, suppose, that a perfect system of it was all at once given to man. It is much more natural to think, that God taught our first parents only such language as suited their present occasions; leaving them, as he did in other things, to enlarge and improve it as their future necessities should require. Consequently, those first rudiments of speech must have been poor and narrow; and we are at full liberty to inquire in what manner, and by what steps, language advanced to the state in which we now find it. The history which I am to give of this progress, will suggest several things, both curious in themselves, and useful in our future disquisitions.

If we should suppose a period before any words were invented or known, it is clear, that men could have no other method of communicating to others what they felt, than by the cries of passion, accompanied with such motions and gestures as were farther expressive of passion. For these are the only signs which nature teaches all men, and which are understood by all. One who saw another going into some place where he himself had been frightened or exposed to danger, and who sought to warn his neighbour of the danger, could contrive no other way of doing so than by uttering those cries, and making those gestures, which are the signs of fear; just as two men, at this day, would endeavour to make themselves be understood by each other, who should be thrown together on a desolate island, ignorant of each other's language. Those exclamations, therefore, which by grammarians are called interjections, uttered in a strong and passionate manner, were, beyond doubt, the first elements or beginnings of speech.

When more enlarged communication became necessary, and names began to be assigned to objects, in what manner can we suppose men to have proceeded in this assignation of names, or invention of words? Undoubtedly, by imitating, as much as they

could, the nature of the object which they named, by the sound of the name which they gave to it. As a painter, who would represent grass, must employ a green colour; so, in the beginnings of language, one giving a name to any thing harsh or boisterous, would of course employ a harsh or a boisterous sound. He could not do otherwise, if he meant to excite in the hearer the idea of that thing which he sought to name. To suppose words invented, or names given to things, in a manner purely arbitrary, without any ground or reason, is to suppose an effect without a cause. There must have always been some motive which led to the assignation of one name rather than another; and we can conceive no motive which would more generally operate upon men in their first efforts towards language, than a desire to paint, by speech, the objects which they named, in a manner more or less complete, according as the vocal organs had it in their power to effect this imitation.

Wherever objects were to be named, in which sound, noise, or motion, were concerned, the imitation by words was abundantly obvious. Nothing was more natural, than to imitate, by the sound of the voice, the quality of the sound or noise which any external object made; and to form its name accordingly. Thus, in all languages, we find a multitude of words that are evidently constructed upon this principle. A certain bird is termed the cuckoo, from the sound which it emits. When one sort of wind is said to *whistle*, and another to *roar;* when a serpent is said to *hiss;* a fly to *buzz*, and falling timber to *crash;* when a stream is said to *flow*, and hail to *rattle;* the analogy between the word and the thing signified is plainly discernible.

In the names of objects which address the sight only, where neither noise nor motion are concerned, and still more in the terms appropriated to moral ideas, this analogy appears to fail. Many learned men, however, have been of opinion, that though, in such cases, it becomes more obscure, yet it is not altogether lost; but that throughout the radical words of all languages, there may be traced some degree of correspondence with the object signified. With regard to moral and intellectual ideas, they remark, that, in every language, the terms significant of them, are derived from the names of sensible objects to which they are conceived to be analogous; and with regard to sensible objects pertaining merely to sight, they remark, that their most distinguishing qualities have certain radical sounds appropriated to the expression of them, in a great variety of languages. Stability, for instance, fluidity, hollowness, smoothness, gentleness, violence, &c. they imagine to be painted by the sound of certain letters or syllables, which have some relation to those different states of visible objects, on account of an obscure resemblance which the organs of voice are capable of assuming to

such external qualities. By this natural mechanism, they imagine all languages to have been at first constructed, and the roots of their capital words formed.*

As far as this system is founded in truth, language appears to be not altogether arbitrary in its origin. Among the ancient Stoic and Platonic philosophers, it was a question much agitated, 'Utrum nomina rerum sint naturâ, an impositione? φυσει ἢ θεσει;' by which they meant, whether words were merely conventional symbols; of the rise of which no account could be given, except the pleasure of the first inventors of language? or, whether there was some principle in nature that led to the assignation of particular names to particular objects? and those of the Platonic school favoured the latter opinion.†

This principle, however, of a natural relation between words

* The author, who has carried his speculations on this subject the farthest, is the President Des Brosses, in his 'Traité de la Formation Mechanique des Langues.' Some of the radical letters or syllables which he supposes to carry this expressive power in most known languages are, St, to signify stability or rest; Fl, to denote fluency; Cl, a gentle descent; R, what relates to rapid motion; C, to cavity or hollowness, &c. A century before his time, Dr. Wallis, in his Grammar of the English Language, had taken notice of these significant roots, and represented it as a peculiar excellency of our tongue, that, beyond all others, it expressed the nature of the objects which it named, by employing sounds sharper, softer, weaker, stronger, more obscure, or more stridulous, according as the idea which is to be suggested requires. He gives various examples. Thus; words formed upon St, always denote firmness and strength, analogous to the Latin *sto*; as, stand, stay, staff, stop, stout, steady, stake, stamp, stallion, stately, &c. Words beginning with Str, intimate violent force, and energy, analogous to the Greek *στρωννυμι*; as, strive, strength, strike, stripe, stress, struggle, stride, stretch, strip, &c. Thr, implies forcible motion; as, throw, throb, thrust, through, threaten, thraldom. Wr, obliquity or distortion; as, wry, wrest, wreath, wrestle, wring, wrong, wrangle, wrath, wrack, &c. Sw, silent agitation, or lateral motion; as, sway, swing, swerve, sweep, swim. Sl, a gentle fall, or less observable motion; as, slide, slip, sly, slit, slow, slack, sling. Sp, dissipation or expansion; as, spread, sprout, sprinkle, split, spill, spring. Terminations in Ash, indicate something acting nimbly and sharply; as, crash, gash, rash, flash, lash, slash. Terminations in Ush, something acting more obtusely and dully; as, crush, brush, hush, gush, blush. The learned author produces a great many more examples of the same kind, which seem to leave no doubt, that the analogies of sound have had some influence on the formation of words. At the same time, in all speculations of this kind, there is so much room for fancy to operate, that they ought to be adopted with much caution in forming any general theory.

† Vid. Plat. in Cratylo. 'Nomina verbaque non posita fortuita, sed quâdam vi et ratione naturæ facta esse, P. Nigidius in Grammaticis Commentariis docet; rem sane in philosophiæ dissertationibus celebrem. In eam rem multa argumenta dicit, cur videri possint verba esse naturalia, magis quam arbitraria. *Vos*, inquit, cum dicimus, motu quodam oris conveniente, cum ipsius verbi demonstratione utimur, et labias sensim primores emovemus, ac spiritum atque animam porro versum, et ad eos quibus consermocinamur intendimus. At contra cum dicimus *Nos*, neque profuso intentoque flatu vocis, neque projectis labiis pronunciamus; sed et spiritum et labias quasi intra nosmet ipsos coërcemus. Hoc fit idem et in eo quod dicimus, *tu*, et *ego*, et *mihi*, et *tibi*. Nam sicuti cum adnuimus et abnuimus, motus quodam illo vel capitis, vel oculorum, a natura rei quem significat, non abhorret, ita in his vocibus quasi gestus quidam oris et spiritus naturalis est. Eadem ratio est in Græcis quoque vocibus quam esse in nostris animadvertimus.'—A. GELLIUS, Noct. Atticæ, lib. x. cap. 4.

and objects, can only be applied to language in its most simple and primitive state. Though, in every tongue, some remains of it, as I have shewn above, can be traced, it were utterly in vain to search for it throughout the whole construction of any modern language. As the multitude of terms increase in every nation, and the immense field of language is filled up, words by a thousand fanciful and irregular methods of derivation and composition, come to deviate widely from the primitive character of their roots, and to lose all analogy or resemblance in sound to the thing signified. In this state we now find language. Words, as we now employ them, taken in the general, may be considered as symbols, not as imitations; as arbitrary, or instituted, not natural signs of ideas. But there can be no doubt, I think, that language, the nearer we remount to its rise among men, will be found to partake more of a natural expression. As it could be originally formed on nothing but imitation, it would, in its primitive state, be more picturesque; much more barren, indeed, and narrow in the circle of its terms, than now; but as far as it went, more expressive by sound of the thing signified. This, then, may be assumed as one character of the first state, or beginnings of language, among every savage tribe.

A second character of language, in its early state, is drawn from the manner in which words were at first pronounced, or uttered, by men. Interjections, I shewed, or passionate exclamations, were the first elements of speech. Men laboured to communicate their feelings to one another, by those expressive cries and gestures which nature taught them. After words, or names of objects, began to be invented, this mode of speaking, by natural signs, could not be all at once disused. For language, in its infancy, must have been extremely barren; and there certainly was a period, among all rude nations, when conversation was carried on by a very few words, intermixed with many exclamations and earnest gestures. The small stock of words which men as yet possessed, rendered these helps absolutely necessary for explaining their conceptions; and rude, uncultivated men, not having always at hand even the few words which they knew, would naturally labour to make themselves understood, by varying their tones of voice, and accompanying their tones with the most significant gesticulations they could make. At this day, when persons attempt to speak in any language which they possess imperfectly, they have recourse to all these supplemental methods, in order to render themselves more intelligible. The plan too, according to which I have shewn, that language was originally constructed, upon resemblance or analogy, as far as was possible, to the thing signified, would naturally lead men to utter their words with more emphasis and force, as long as language was a sort of painting by means of

sound. For all those reasons this may be assumed as a principle, that the pronunciation of the earliest languages was accompanied with more gesticulation, and with more and greater inflexions of voice, than what we now use; there was more action in it; and it was more upon a crying or singing tone.

To this manner of speaking, necessity first gave rise. But we must observe, that, after this necessity had, in a great measure, ceased, by language becoming, in process of time, more extensive and copious, the ancient manner of speech still subsisted among many nations; and what had arisen from necessity continued to be used for ornament. Wherever there was much fire and vivacity in the genius of nations, they were naturally inclined to a mode of conversation which gratified the imagination so much; for an imagination which is warm is always prone to throw both a great deal of action and a variety of tones into discourse. Upon this principle, Dr. Warburton accounts for so much speaking by action, as we find among the Old Testament prophets; as when Jeremiah breaks the potter's vessel, in sight of the people; throws a book into the Euphrates; puts on bonds and yokes; and carries out his household stuff; all which, he imagines, might be significant modes of expression, very natural in those ages when men were accustomed to explain themselves so much by actions and gestures. In like manner among the Northern American tribes, certain motions and actions were found to be much used, as explanatory of their meaning, on all their great occasions of intercourse with each other; and by the belts and strings of wampum, which they gave and received, they were accustomed to declare their meaning as much as by their discourses.

With regard to inflexions of voice, these are so natural, that, to some nations, it has appeared easier to express different ideas, by varying the tone with which they pronounced the same word, than to contrive words for all their ideas. This is the practice of the Chinese in particular. The number of words in their language is said not to be great: but in speaking, they vary each of their words on no less than five different tones, by which they make the same word signify five different things. This must give a great appearance of music or singing to their speech. those inflexions of voice, which, in the infancy of language, were no more than harsh or dissonant cries, must, as language gradually polishes, pass into more smooth and musical sounds: and hence is formed, what we call, the prosody of a language.

It is remarkable, and deserves attention, that both in the Greek and Roman languages, this musical and gesticulating pronunciation was retained in a very high degree. Without having attended to this, we shall be at a loss in understanding several passages of the classics, which relate to the public speaking, and the theatrical entertainments of the ancients. It appears, from many circum

stances, that the prosody both of the Greeks and Romans was carried much farther than ours, or that they spoke with more and stronger inflexions of voice than we use. The quantity of their syllables was much more fixed than in any of the modern languages, and rendered much more sensible to the ear in pronouncing them. Besides quantities, or the difference of short and long, accents were placed upon most of their syllables, the acute, grave, and circumflex; the use of which accents we have now entirely lost, but which, we know, determined the speaker's voice to rise or fall. Our modern pronunciation must have appeared to them a lifeless monotony. The declamation of their orators, and the pronunciation of their actors upon the stage, approaching to the nature of a recitative in music, was capable of being marked in notes, and supported with instruments; as several learned men have fully proved. And if this was the case, as they have shewn, among the Romans, the Greeks, it is well known, were still a more musical people than the Romans, and carried their attention to tone and pronunciation much farther in every public exhibition. Aristotle, in his Poëtics, considers the music of tragedy as one of its chief and most essential parts.

The case was parallel with regard to gestures: for strong tones, and animated gestures, we may observe, always go together. Action is treated of by all the ancient critics, as the chief quality in every public speaker. The action both of the orators and the players in Greece and Rome, was far more vehement than what we are accustomed to. Roscius would have seemed a madman to us. Gesture was of such consequence upon the ancient stage, that there is reason for believing, that, on some occasions, the speaking and the acting part were divided, which, according to our ideas, would form a strange exhibition; one player spoke the words in the proper tones, while another performed the corresponding motions and gestures. We learn from Cicero, that it was a contest between him and Roscius, whether he could express a sentiment in a greater variety of phrases. or Roscius in a greater variety of intelligible significant gestures. At last gesture came to engross the stage wholly; for, under the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, the favourite entertainment of the public was the pantomime, which was carried on entirely by mute gesticulation. The people were moved, and wept at it, as much as at tragedies; and the passion for it became so strong that laws were obliged to be made for restraining the senators from studying the pantomime art. Now, though in declamations and theatrical exhibitions, both tone and gesture were, doubtless, carried much farther than in common discourse; yet public speaking, of any kind, must, in every country, bear some proportion to the manner that is used in conversation; and such public entertainments as I have now mentioned, could never have been relished by a nation, whose tones and gestures, in discourse, were as languid as ours.

When the barbarians spread themselves over the Roman empire, these more phlegmatic nations did not retain the accents, the tones, and gestures, which necessity at first introduced, and custom and fancy afterward so long supported, in the Greek and Roman languages. As the Latin tongue was lost in their idioms, so the character of speech and pronunciation began to be changed throughout Europe. Nothing of the same attention was paid to the music of language, or to the pomp of declamation and theatrical action. Both conversation and public speaking became more simple and plain, such as we now find it; without that enthusiastic mixture of tones and gestures, which distinguished the ancient nations. At the restoration of letters, the genius of language was so much altered, and the manners of the people had become so different, that it was no easy matter to understand what the ancients had said, concerning their declamations and public spectacles. Our plain manner of speaking in these northern countries, expresses the passions with sufficient energy to move those who are not accustomed to any more vehement manner. But, undoubtedly, more varied tones, and more animated motions, carry a natural expression of warmer feelings. Accordingly, in different modern languages, the prosody of speech partakes more of music, in proportion to the liveliness and sensibility of the people.

A Frenchman both varies his accents, and gesticulates while he speaks, much more than an Englishman. An Italian a great deal more than either. Musical pronunciation and expressive gesture are, to this day, the distinction of Italy.

From the pronunciation of language, let us proceed, in the third place, to consider the style of language in its most early state, and its progress in this respect also. As the manner in which men at first uttered their words, and maintained conversation, was strong and expressive, enforcing their imperfectly expressed ideas by cries and gestures; so the language which they used, could be no other than full of figures and metaphors, not correct indeed, but forcible and picturesque.

We are apt, upon a superficial view, to imagine, that those modes of expression which are called figures of speech are among the chief refinements of speech, not invented till after language had advanced to its later periods, and mankind were brought into a polished state; and that, then, they were devised by orators and rhetoricians. The contrary of this is the truth. Mankind never employed so many figures of speech. as when they had hardly any words for expressing their meaning.

For, first, the want of proper names for every object obliged them to use one name for many; and, of course, to express themselves by comparisons, metaphors, allusions, and all those substituted forms of speech which render language figurative. Next,

as the objects with which they were most conversant, were the sensible, material objects around them, names would be given to those objects long before words were invented for signifying the dispositions of the mind, or any sort of moral and intellectual ideas. Hence the early language of men being entirely made up of words descriptive of sensible objects, it became, of necessity, extremely metaphorical. For, to signify any desire or passion, or any act or feeling of the mind, they had no precise expression which was appropriated to that purpose, but were under a necessity of painting the emotion or passion, which they felt, by allusion to those sensible objects which had most relation to it, and which could render it, in some sort, visible to others.

But it was not necessity alone that gave rise to this figured style. Other circumstances also, at the commencement of language, contributed to it. In the infancy of all societies, men are much under the dominion of imagination and passion. They live scattered and dispersed: they are unacquainted with the course of things; they are, every day, meeting with new and strange objects. Fear and surprise, wonder and astonishment, are their most frequent passions. Their language will necessarily partake of this character of their minds. They will be prone to exaggeration and hyperbole. They will be given to describe every thing with the strongest colours, and most vehement expressions; infinitely more than men living in the advanced and cultivated periods of society, when their imagination is more chastened, their passions are more tamed, and a wider experience has rendered the objects of life more familiar to them. Even the manner in which I before shewed that the first tribes of men uttered their words, would have considerable influence on their style. Wherever strong exclamations, tones, and gestures, enter much into conversation, the imagination is always more exercised; a greater effort of fancy and passion is excited. Consequently, the fancy, kept awake and rendered more sprightly by this mode of utterance, operates upon style, and enlivens it more.

These reasonings are confirmed by undoubted facts. The style of all the most early languages, among nations who are in the first and rude periods of society, is found, without exception, to be full of figures; hyperbolical and picturesque in a high degree. We have a striking instance of this in the American languages, which are known, by the most authentic accounts, to be figurative to excess. The Iroquois and Illinois carry on their treaties and public transactions with bolder metaphors, and greater pomp of style, than we use in our poetical productions.*

* Thus, to give an instance of the singular style of these nations, the Five Nations of Canada, when entering on a treaty of peace with us, expressed themselves by their chiefs in the following language: 'We are happy in having buried under ground the

Another remarkable instance is, the style of the Old Testament, which is carried on by constant allusions to sensible objects. Iniquity, or guilt, is expressed by 'a spotted garment;' misery, by 'drinking the cup of astonishment;' vain pursuits, by 'feeding on ashes;' a sinful life, by 'a crooked path;' prosperity, by 'the candle of the Lord shining on our head;' and the like, in innumerable instances. Hence we have been accustomed to call this sort of style the Oriental Style; as fancying it to be peculiar to the nations of the East; whereas, from the American style, and from many other instances, it plainly appears not to have been peculiar to any one region or climate; but to have been common to all nations in certain periods of society and language.

Hence we may receive some light concerning that seeming paradox, that poetry is more ancient than prose. I shall have occasion to discuss this point fully hereafter, when I come to treat of the nature and origin of poetry. At present, it is sufficient to observe, that from what has been said it plainly appears that the style of all language must have been originally poetical; strongly tinctured with that enthusiasm, and that descriptive metaphorical expression, which distinguishes poetry.

As language, in its progress, began to grow more copious, it gradually lost that figurative style which was its early character. When men were furnished with proper and familiar names for every object, both sensible and moral, they were not obliged to use so many circumlocutions. Style became more precise, and, of course, more simple. Imagination too, in proportion as society advanced, had less influence over mankind. The vehement manner of speaking by tones and gestures began to be disused. The understanding was more exercised; the fancy, less. Intercourse among mankind becoming more extensive and frequent, clearness of style, in signifying their meaning to each other, was the chief object of attention. In place of poets, philosophers became the instructors

red axe, that has so often been dyed with the blood of our brethren. Now, in this fort, we inter the axe, and plant the tree of Peace. We plant a tree, whose top will reach the sun; and its branches spread abroad, so that it shall be seen afar off. May its growth never be stifled and choked; but may it shade both your country and ours with its leaves! Let us make fast its roots, and extend them to the utmost of your colonies. If the French should come to shake this tree, we would know it by the motion of its roots reaching into our country. May the Great Spirit allow us to rest in tranquillity upon our mats, and never again dig up the axe to cut down the tree of Peace: Let the earth be trod hard over it, where it lies buried. Let a strong stream run under the pit, to wash the evil away out of our sight and remembrance. The fire that had long burned in Albany is extinguished. The bloody bed is washed clean, and the tears are wiped from our eyes. We now renew the covenant chain of friendship. Let it be kept bright and clean as silver, and not suffered to contract any rust. Let not any one pull away his arm from it.' These passages are extracted from Cadwallader Colden's History of the Five Indian Nations: where it appears, from the authentic documents he produces, that such is their genuine style.

of men; and, in their reasonings on all different subjects, introduced that plainer and simpler style of composition, which we now call prose. Among the Greeks, Pherecydes of Scyros, the master of Pythagoras, is recorded to have been the first, who, in this sense, composed any writing in prose. The ancient metaphorical and poetical dress of language was now laid aside from the intercourse of men, and reserved for those occasions only on which ornament was professedly studied.

Thus I have pursued the history of language through some of the variations it has undergone: I have considered it, in the first structure and composition of words; in the manner of uttering or pronouncing words; and in the style and character of speech. I have yet to consider it in another view, respecting the order and arrangement of words; when we shall find a progress to have taken place, similar to what I have been now illustrating.

LECTURE VII.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE AND OF WRITING.

When we attend to the order in which words are arranged in a sentence, or significant proposition, we find a very remarkable difference between the ancient and the modern tongues. The consideration of this will serve to unfold farther the genius of language, and to shew the causes of those alterations which it has undergone in the progress of society.

In order to conceive distinctly the nature of that alteration of which I now speak, let us go back, as we did formerly, to the most early period of language. Let us figure to ourselves a savage, who beholds some object, such as fruit, which raises his desire, and who requests another to give it to him. Supposing our savage to be unacquainted with words, he would, in that case, labour to make himself be understood, by pointing earnestly at the object which he desired, and uttering at the same time, a passionate cry. Supposing him to have acquired words, the first word which he uttered would, of course, be the name of that object. He would not express himself, according to our English order of construction, 'Give me fruit;' but, according to the Latin order, 'Fruit give me;' 'Fructum da mihi:' for this plain reason, that his attention was wholly directed towards fruit, the desired object. This was the exciting idea; the object which moved him to speak; and of course, would be the first named. Such an arrangement is precisely putting into words the gesture which nature taught the savage to make, before he was acquainted with words; and therefore it

may be depended upon as certain, that he would fall most readily into this arrangement.

Accustomed now to a different method of ordering our words, we call this an inversion, and consider it as a forced and unnatural order of speech. But though not the most logical, it is however, in one view, the most natural order; because, it is the order suggested by imagination and desire, which always impel us to mention their object in the first place. We might therefore conclude, *à priori*, that this would be the order in which words were most commonly arranged at the beginnings of language; and accordingly we find, in fact, that, in this order, words are arranged in most of the ancient tongues; as in the Greek and Latin; and it is said also, in the Russian, the Sclavonic, the Gaëlic, and several of the American tongues.

In the Latin language, the arrangement which most commonly obtains is, to place first in the sentence that word which expresses the principal object of the discourse, together with its circumstances; and afterward, the person, or the thing that acts upon it. Thus Sallust, comparing together the mind and the body; 'Animi imperio, corporis servitio, magis utimur;' which order certainly renders the sentence more lively and striking than when it is arranged according to our English construction; 'We make most use of the direction of the soul, and of the service of the body.' The Latin order gratifies more the rapidity of the imagination, which naturally runs first to that which is its chief object; and having once named it, carries it in view throughout the rest of the sentence. In the same manner in poetry:

> Justum et tenacem propositi virum,
> Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
> Non vultus instantis tyranni,
> Mente quatit solidâ——.

Every person of taste must be sensible, that here the words are arranged with a much greater regard to the figure which the several objects make in the fancy, than our English construction admits; which would require the 'Justum et tenacem propositi virum,' though, undoubtedly, the capital object in the sentence, to be thrown into the last place.

I have said, that in the Greek and Roman languages, the most common arrangement is, to place that first which strikes the imagination of the speaker most. I do not, however, pretend, that this holds without exception. Sometimes regard to the harmony of the period requires a different order; and in languages susceptible of so much musical beauty, pronounced with so much tone and modulation as were used by those nations, the harmony of periods was an object carefully studied. Sometimes, too, attention to the perspicuity, to the force, or to the artful suspension of the speaker's

meaning, alter this order; and produce such varieties in the arrangement, that it is not easy to reduce them to any one principle. But, in general, this was the genius and character of most of the ancient languages, to give such full liberty to the collocation of words, as allowed them to assume whatever order was most agreeable to the speaker's imagination. The Hebrew is indeed an exception: which, though not altogether without inversions, yet employs them less frequently, and approaches nearer to the English construction than either the Greek or the Latin.

All the modern languages of Europe have adopted a different arrangement from the ancient. In their prose compositions, very little variety is admitted in the collocation of words; they are mostly fixed to one order; and that order is, what may be called the order of the understanding. They place first in the sentence, the person or thing which speaks or acts; next, its action; and lastly the object of its action. So that the ideas are made to succeed to one another, not according to the degree of importance which the several objects carry in the imagination, but according to the order of nature and of time.

An English writer, paying a compliment to a great man, would say thus: 'It is impossible for me to pass over in silence such remarkable mildness, such singular and unheard-of clemency, and such unusual moderation, in the exercise of supreme power.' Here we have first presented to us the person who speaks, 'It is impossible for *me*;' next, what that person is to do, 'impossible for him *to pass over in silence*;' and lastly, the object which moves him so to do, 'the mildness, clemency, and moderation of his patron.' Cicero, from whom I have translated these words, just reverses this order; beginning with the object, placing that first which was the exciting idea in the speaker's mind, and ending with the speaker and his action. 'Tantam mansuetudinem, tam inusitatam inauditamque clementiam, tantumque in summâ potestate rerum omnium modum, tacitus nullo modo præterire possum.' (Orat. pro Marcell.)

The Latin order is more animated; the English more clear and distinct, The Romans generally arranged their words according to the order in which the ideas rose in the speaker's imagination. We arrange them according to the order in which the understanding directs those ideas to be exhibited, in succession, to the view of another. Our arrangement, therefore, appears to be the consequence of greater refinement in the art of speech; as far as clearness in communication is understood to be the end of speech.

In poetry, where we are supposed to rise above the ordinary style, and to speak the language of fancy and passion, our arrangement is not altogether so limited; but some greater liberty is allowed for transposition and inversion. Even there, however, that liberty is confined within narrow bounds, in comparison of the ancient

languages. The different modern tongues vary from one another, in this respect. The French language is, of them all, the most determinate in the order of its words, and admits the least of inversion, either in prose or poetry. The English admits it more. But the Italian retains the most of the ancient transpositive character; though one is apt to think it attended with a little obscurity in the style of some of their authors, who deal most in these transpositions.

It is proper, next, to observe, that there is one circumstance in the structure of all the modern tongues, which, if necessary, limits their arrangement, in a great measure, to one fixed and determinate train. We have disused those differences of termination, which, in the Greek and Latin, distinguished the several cases of nouns, and tenses of verbs; and which, thereby, pointed out the mutual relation of the several words in a sentence to one another, though the related words were disjoined, and placed in different parts of the sentence. This is an alteration in the structure of language, of which I shall have occasion to say more in the next Lecture. One obvious effect of it is, that we have now, for the most part, no way left us to shew the close relation of any two words to each other in meaning, but by placing them close to one another in the period. For instance, the Romans could, with propriety, express themselves thus:

> Extinctum nymphæ crudeli funere Daphnim
> Flebant.———

Because 'Extinctum et Daphnim,' being both in the accusative case, this shewed, that the adjective and the substantive were related to each other, though placed at the two extremities of the line; and that both were governed by the active verb 'Flebant,' to which 'Nymphæ' plainly appeared to be the nominative. The different terminations here reduced all into order, and made the connexion of the several words perfectly clear. But let us translate these words literally into English, according to the Latin arrangement; 'Dead the nymphs by a cruel fate Daphnis lamented;' and they become a perfect riddle, in which it is impossible to find any meaning.

It was by means of this contrivance, which obtained in almost all the ancient languages, of varying the termination of the nouns and verbs, and thereby pointing out the concordance, and the government of the words, in a sentence, that they enjoyed so much liberty of transposition, and could marshal and arrange their words in any way that gratified the imagination, or pleased the ear. When language came to be modelled by the northern nations who overran the empire, they dropped the cases of nouns, and the different termination of verbs, with the more ease, because they

placed no great value upon the advantages arising from such a structure of language. They were attentive only to clearness, and copiousness of expression. They neither regarded much the harmony of sound, nor sought to gratify the imagination by the collocation of words. They studied solely to express themselves in such a manner as should exhibit their ideas to others in the most distinct and intelligible order. And hence, if our language, by reason of the simple arrangement of its words, possesses less harmony, less beauty, and less force, than the Greek or Latin; it is, however, in its meaning, more obvious and plain.

Thus I have shewn what the natural progress of language has been, in several material articles; and this account of the genius and progress of language lays a foundation for many observations, both curious and useful. From what has been said in this, and the preceding Lecture, it appears, that language was, at first, barren in words, but descriptive by the sound of these words; and expressive in the manner of uttering them, by the aid of significant tones and gestures: style was figurative and poetical: arrangement was fanciful and lively. It appears, that in all the successive changes which language has undergone, as the world advanced, the understanding has gained ground on the fancy and imagination. The progress of language, in this respect, resembles the progress of age in man. The imagination is most vigorous and predominant in youth; with advancing years, the imagination cools, and the understanding ripens. Thus language, proceeding from sterility to copiousness, hath, at the same time, proceeded from vivacity to accuracy; from fire and enthusiasm, to coolness and precision. Those characters of early language, descriptive sound, vehement tones and gestures, figurative style, and inverted arrangement, all hang together, have a mutual influence on each other; and have all gradually given place to arbitrary sounds, calm pronunciation, simple style, plain arrangement. Language is become, in modern times, more correct, indeed, and accurate; but, however, less striking and animated: in its ancient state, more favourable to poetry and oratory; in its present, to reason and philosophy.

Having finished my account of the progress of speech, I proceed to give an account of the progress of Writing, which next demands our notice; though it will not require so full a discussion as the former subject.

Next to speech, writing is, beyond doubt, the most useful art which men possess. It is plainly an improvement upon speech, and therefore must have been posterior to it in order of time. At first, men thought of nothing more than communicating their thoughts to one another, when present, by means of words, or sounds, which they uttered. Afterward, they devised this farther

method, of mutual communication with one another, when absent, by means of marks or characters presented to the eye, which we call writing.

Written characters are of two sorts. They are either signs for things, or signs for words. Of the former sort, signs of things, are the pictures, hieroglyphics, and symbols, employed by the ancient nations; of the latter sort, signs for words, are the alphabetical characters, now employed by all Europeans. These two kinds of writing are generically, and essentially, distinct.

Pictures were, undoubtedly, the first essay towards writing. Imitation is so natural to man, that, in all ages, and among all nations, some methods have obtained, of copying or tracing the likeness of sensible objects. Those methods would soon be employed by men for giving some imperfect information to others, at a distance, of what had happened; or, for preserving the memory of facts which they sought to record. Thus, to signify that one man had killed another, they drew the figure of one man stretched upon the earth, and of another standing by him with a deadly weapon in his hand. We find, in fact, that when America was first discovered, this was the only sort of writing known in the kingdom of Mexico. By historical pictures, the Mexicans are said to have transmitted the memory of the most important transactions of their empire. These, however, must have been extremely imperfect records; and the nations who had no other, must have been very gross and rude. Pictures could do no more than delineate external events. They could neither exhibit the connexions of them, nor describe such qualities as were not visible to the eye, nor convey any idea of the dispositions, or words, of men.

To supply, in some degree, this defect, there arose, in process of time, the invention of what are called, Hieroglyphical Characters; which may be considered as the second stage of the art of writing. Hieroglyphics consist in certain symbols, which are made to stand for invisible objects, on account of an analogy or resemblance which such symbols were supposed to bear to the objects. Thus, an eye was the hieroglyphical symbol of knowledge; a circle, of eternity, which has neither beginning nor end. Hieroglyphics, therefore, were a more refined and extensive species of painting. Pictures delineated the resemblance of external visible objects. Hieroglyphics painted invisible objects, by analogies taken from the external world.

Among the Mexicans were found some traces of hieroglyphical characters, intermixed with their historical pictures. But Egypt was the country where this sort of writing was most studied and brought into a regular art. In hieroglyphics was conveyed all the boasted wisdom of their priests. According to the properties which they ascribed to animals, or the qualities with which they

supposed natural objects to be endowed, they pitched upon them to be the emblems, or hieroglyphics, of moral objects; and employed them in their writing for that end. Thus, ingratitude was denominated by a viper; imprudence, by a fly; wisdom, by an ant; victory, by a hawk; a dutiful child, by a stork; a man universally shunned, by an eel, which they supposed to be found in company with no other fish. Sometimes they joined together two or more of these hieroglyphical characters; as a serpent with a hawk's head; to denote nature, with God presiding over it. But as many of those properties of objects which they assumed for the foundation of their hieroglyphics, were merely imaginary, and the allusions drawn from them were forced and ambiguous; as the conjunction of their characters rendered them still more obscure, and must have expressed very indistinctly the connexions and relations of things; this sort of writing could be no other than enigmatical, and confused in the highest degree; and must have been a very imperfect vehicle of knowledge of any kind.

It has been imagined that hieroglyphics were an invention of the Egyptian priests, for concealing their learning from common view; and, that, upon this account, it was preferred by them to the alphabetical method of writing. But this is certainly a mistake. Hieroglyphics were, undoubtedly, employed at first from necessity, not from choice or refinement; and would never have been thought of, if alphabetical characters had been known. The nature of the invention plainly shews it to have been one of those gross and rude essays towards writing, which were adopted in the early ages of the world; in order to extend farther the first method which they had employed of simple pictures, or representations of visible objects. Indeed, in after times, when alphabetical writing was introduced into Egypt, and the hieroglyphical was, of course, fallen into disuse, it is known, that the priests still employed the hieroglyphical characters, as a sacred kind of writing, now become peculiar to themselves, and serving to give an air of mystery to their learning and religion. In this state, the Greeks found hieroglyphical writing when they began to have intercourse with Egypt; and some of their writers mistook this use to which they found it applied, for the cause that had given rise to the invention.

As writing advanced from pictures of visible objects, to hieroglyphics, or symbols of things invisible; from these latter it advanced, among some nations, to simple arbitrary marks which stood for objects, though without any resemblance or analogy to the objects signified. Of this nature was the method of writing practised among the Peruvians. They made use of small cords, of different colours; and by knots upon these, of various sizes, and differently ranged, they contrived signs for giving information, and communicating their thoughts to one another.

Of this nature also, are the written characters which are used to this day throughout the great empire of China.* The Chinese have no alphabet of letters, or simple sounds, which compose their words. But every single character which they use in writing, is significant of an idea; it is a mark which stands for some one thing or object. By consequence, the number of these characters must be immense. It must correspond to the whole number of objects or ideas, which they have occasion to express; that is, to the whole number of words which they employ in speech: nay, it must be greater than the number of words; one word, by varying the tone, with which it is spoken, may be made to signify several different things. They are said to have seventy thousand of those written characters. To read and write them to perfection is the study of a whole life, which subjects learning, among them, to infinite disadvantage; and must have greatly retarded the progress of all science.

Concerning the origin of these Chinese characters, there have been different opinions, and much controversy. According to the most probable accounts, the Chinese writing began, like the Egyptian, with pictures, and hieroglyphical figures. These figures being, in progress, abbreviated in their form, for the sake of writing them easily, and greatly enlarged in their number, passed at length into those marks or characters which they now use, and which have spread themselves through several nations of the east. For we are informed, that the Japanese, the Tonquinese, and the Corœans, who speak different languages from one another, and from the inhabitants of China, use, however, the same written characters with them; and, by this means, correspond intelligibly with each other in writing, though ignorant of the language spoken in their several countries; a plain proof, that the Chinese characters are, like hieroglyphics, independent of language; are signs of things, not of words.

We have one instance of this sort of writing in Europe. Our ciphers, as they are called, or arithmetical figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c. which we have derived from the Arabians, are significant marks precisely of the same nature with the Chinese characters. They have no dependance on words; but each figure denotes an object; denotes the number for which it stands; and accordingly, on being presented to the eye, is equally understood by all the nations who have agreed in the use of these ciphers; by Italians, Spaniards, French, and English, however different the languages of those nations are from one another, and whatever different names they give in their respective languages, to each numerical cipher.

As far, then, as we have yet advanced, nothing has appeared which resembles our letters, or which can be called writing, in the sense we now give to that term. What we have hitherto seen.

were all direct signs for things, and made no use of the medium of sound, or words; either signs by representation, as the Mexican pictures; or signs by analogy, as the Egyptian hieroglyphics; or signs by institution, as the Peruvian knots, the Chinese characters, and the Arabian ciphers.

At length, in different nations, men became sensible of the imperfection, the ambiguity, and the tediousness of each of these methods of communication with one another. They began to consider, that by employing signs which should stand not directly for things, but for the words which they used in speech for naming these things, a considerable advantage would be gained. For they reflected farther, that though the number of words in every language be, indeed, very great, yet the number of articulate sounds, which are used in composing these words, is comparatively small. The same simple sounds are continually recurring and repeated; and are combined together, in various ways, for forming all the variety of words which we utter. They bethought themselves, therefore, of inventing signs, not for each word by itself, but for each of those simple sounds which we employ in forming our words; and by joining together a few of those signs, they saw that it would be practicable to express, in writing, the whole combinations or sounds which our words require.

The first step in this new progress, was the invention of an alphabet of syllables, which probably preceded the invention of an alphabet of letters, among some of the ancient nations; and which is said to be retained, to this day, in Æthiopia, and some countries of India. By fixing upon a particular mark, or character, for every syllable in the language, the number of characters, necessary to be used in writing, was reduced within a much smaller compass than the number of words in the language. Still, however, the number of characters was great; and must have continued to render both reading and writing very laborious arts. Till, at last, some happy genius arose; and tracing the sounds made by the human voice to their most simple elements, reduced them to a very few vowels and consonants; and by affixing to each of these the signs, which we now call letters, taught men how, by their combinations, to put in writing all the different words, or combinations of sound, which they employed in speech. By being reduced to this simplicity, the art of writing was brought to its highest state of perfection; and, in this state, we now enjoy it in all the countries of Europe.

To whom we are indebted for this sublime and refined discovery does not appear. Concealed by the darkness of remote antiquity, the great inventor is deprived of those honours which would still be paid to his memory, by all the lovers of knowledge and learning. It appears from the books which Moses has written, that among the Jews, and probably among the Egyptians, letters had been in-

vented prior to his age. The universal tradition among the ancients is, that they were first imported into Greece by Cadmus the Phœnician; who, according to the common system of chronology, was contemporary with Joshua; according to Sir Isaac Newton's system, contemporary with King David. As the Phœnicians are not known to have been the inventors of any art or science, though, by means of their extensive commerce, they propagated the discoveries made by other nations, the most probable and natural account of the origin of alphabetical characters is, that they took rise in Egypt, the first civilized kingdom of which we have any authentic accounts, and the great source of arts and polity among the ancients. In that country, the favourite study of hieroglyphical characters had directed much attention to the art of writing. Their hieroglyphics are known to have been intermixed with abbreviated symbols, and arbitrary marks; whence, at last, they caught the idea of contriving marks, not for things merely, but for sounds. Accordingly, Plato (in Phædo) expressly attributes the invention of letters to Theuth, the Egyptian, who is supposed to have been the Hermes, or Mercury, of the Greeks. Cadmus himself, though he passed from Phœnicia to Greece, yet is affirmed, by several of the ancients, to have been originally of Thebes in Egypt. Most probably, Moses carried with him the Egyptian letters into the land of Canaan; and there being adopted by the Phœnicians, who inhabited part of that country, they were transmitted into Greece.

The alphabet which Cadmus brought into Greece was imperfect, and is said to have contained only sixteen letters. The rest were afterward added, according as signs for proper sounds were found to be wanting. It is curious to observe, that the letters which we use at this day, can be traced back to this very alphabet of Cadmus. The Roman alphabet, which obtains with us, and with most of the European nations, is plainly formed on the Greek, with a few variations. And all learned men observe, that the Greek characters, especially according to the manner in which they are formed in the oldest inscriptions, have a remarkable conformity to the Hebrew or Samaritan characters, which, it is agreed, are the same with the Phœnician, or alphabet of Cadmus. Invert the Greek characters from left to right, according to the Phœnician and Hebrew manner of writing, and they are nearly the same. Besides the conformity of figure, the names or denominations of the letters, alpha, beta, gamma, &c. and the order in which the letters are arranged in all the several alphabets, Phœnician, Hebrew, Greek and Roman, agree so much, as amounts to a demonstration, that they were all derived originally from the same source. An invention so useful and simple was greedily received by mankind, and propagated with speed and facility through many different nations.

The letters were, originally, written from the right hand towards the left; that is, in a contrary order to what we now practise. This manner of writing obtained among the Assyrians, Phœnicians, Arabians, and Hebrews; and from some very old inscriptions, appears to have obtained also among the Greeks. Afterward, the Greeks adopted a new method, writing their lines alternately from the right to the left, and from the left to the right, which was called 'Boustrophedon;' or writing after the manner in which oxen plough the ground. Of this, several specimens still remain; particularly, the inscription on the famous Sigæan monument; and down to the days of Solon, the legislator of Athens, this continued to be the common method of writing. At length, the motion from the left hand to the right being found more natural and commodious, the practise of writing in this direction prevailed throughout all the countries of Europe.

Writing was long a kind of engraving. Pillars, and tablets of stone, were first employed for this purpose, and afterward, plates of the softer metals, such as lead. In proportion as writing became more common, lighter and more portable substances were employed. The leaves, and the bark of certain trees, were used in some countries; and in others, tablets of wood, covered with a thin coat of soft wax, on which the impression was made with a stylus of iron. In latter times, the hides of animals, properly prepared, and polished into parchment, were the most common materials. Our present method of writing on paper, is an invention of no greater antiquity than the fourteenth century.

Thus I have given some account of the progress of these two great arts, speech and writing; by which men's thoughts are communicated, and the foundation laid for all knowledge and improvement. Let us conclude the subject with comparing, in a few words, spoken language, and written language; or words uttered in our hearing, with words represented to the eye; where we shall find several advantages and disadvantages to be balanced on both sides.

The advantages of writing above speech are, that writing is both a more extensive, and a more permanent method of communication. More extensive; as it is not confined within the narrow circle of those who hear our words; but by means of written characters, we can send our thoughts abroad, and propagate them through the world; we can lift our voice, so as to speak to the most distant regions of the earth. More permanent also, as it prolongs this voice to the most distant ages; it gives us the means of recording our sentiments to futurity, and of perpetuating the instructive memory of past transactions. It likewise affords this advantage to such as read, above such as hear, that having the written characters before their eyes, they can arrest the sense of the writer. They can pause, and revolve, and compare at their leisure, one pas

sage with another; whereas, the voice is fugitive and passing; you must catch the words the moment they are uttered, or you lose them for ever.

But, although these be so great advantages of written language, that speech without writing would have been very inadequate for the instruction of mankind: yet we must not forget to observe, that spoken language has a great superiority over written language, in point of energy or force. The voice of the living speaker makes an impression on the mind, much stronger than can be made by the perusal of any writing. The tones of voice, the looks and gestures which accompany discourse, and which no writing can convey, render discourse, when it is well managed, infinitely more clear, and more expressive, than the most accurate writing. For tones, looks, and gestures, are natural interpreters of the sentiments of the mind. They remove ambiguities; they enforce impressions; they operate on us by means of sympathy, which is one of the most powerful instruments of persuasion. Our sympathy is always awakened more by hearing the speaker, than by reading his works in our closet. Hence, though writing may answer the purposes of mere instruction, yet all the great and high efforts of eloquence must be made by means of spoken, not of written, language.

LECTURE VIII.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

After having given an account of the rise and progress of language, I proceed to treat of its structure, or of general grammar. The structure of language is extremely artificial; and there are few sciences in which a deeper, or more refined logic is employed, than in grammar. It is apt to be slighted by superficial thinkers, as belonging to those rudiments of knowledge, which were inculcated upon us in our earliest youth. But what was then inculcated before we could comprehend its principles, would abundantly repay our study in maturer years; and to the ignorance of it, must be attributed many of those fundamental defects which appear in writing.

Few authors have written with philosophical accuracy on the principles of general grammar; and, what is more to be regretted, fewer still have thought of applying those principles to the English language. While the French tongue has long been an object of attention to many able and ingenious writers of that nation, who have considered its construction, and determined its propriety with great accuracy, the genius and grammar of the English, to the reproach of the country, have not been studied with equal care, or ascertained with the same precision. Attempts

have been made, indeed, of late, towards supplying this defect; and some able writers have entered on the subject: but much remains yet to be done.

I do not propose to give any system, either of grammar in general, or of English grammar in particular. A minute discussion of the niceties of language would carry us too much off from other objects; which demand our attention in the course of Lectures. But I propose to give a general view of the chief principles relating to this subject, in observations on the several parts of which speech or language is composed; remarking as I go along, the peculiarities of our own tongue. After which I shall make some more particular remarks on the genius of the English language.

The first thing to be considered, is the division of the several parts of speech. The essential parts of speech are the same in all languages. There must always be some words which denote the names of objects, or mark the subject of discourse; other words, which denote the qualities of those objects, and express what we affirm concerning them; and other words, which point out their connexions and relations. Hence, substantives, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, prepositions, and conjunctions, must necessarily be found in all languages. The most simple and comprehensive division of the parts of speech is, into substantives, attributives, and connectives.* Substantives, are all the words which express the names of objects, or the subjects of discourse; attributives, are all the words which express any attribute, property, or action of the former; connectives, are what express the connexions, relations, and dependencies, which take place among them. The common grammatical division of speech into eight parts; nouns, pronouns, verbs, participles, adverbs, prepositions, interjections, and conjunctions; is not very logical, as might be easily shewn; as it comprehends under the general term of nouns, both substantives and adjectives, which are parts of speech generically and essentially distinct; while it makes a separate part of speech of participles, which are no other than verbal adjectives. However, as these are the terms to which our ears have been most familiarised, and as an exact logical division is of no great consequence to our present purpose, it will be better to make use of these known terms than of any other.

* Quinctilian informs us, that this was the most ancient division. 'Tum videbit quot et quæ sunt partes orationis, quanquam de numero parum convenit. Veteres enim, quorum fuerant Aristoteles atque Theodectes, verba modo, et nomina, et convinctiones tradiderunt. Videlicet, quod in verbis vim sermonis, in nominibus materiam, (quia alterum est quod loquimur, alterum de quo loquimur,) in convinctionibus autem complexum eorum esse judicârunt; quas conjunctiones a plerisque dici scio; sed hæc videtur ex συνδεσμα magis propria translatio. Paulatim a philosophicis ac maximè a stoicis, auctus est numerus; ac primùm convinctionibus articuli adjecti; post prepositiones; nominibus, appellatio, deinde pronomen; deinde mistum verbo participium; ipsis verbis, adverbia.' Lib. i. cap. iv.

We are naturally led to begin with the consideration of substantive nouns, which are the foundation of all grammar, and may be considered as the most ancient part of speech. For, assuredly, as soon as men had got beyond simple interjections, or exclamations of passion, and began to communicate themselves by discourse, they would be under a necessity of assigning names to the objects they saw around them; which, in grammatical language, is called the invention of substantive nouns.* And here at our first setting out, somewhat curious occurs. The individual objects which surround us are infinite in number. A savage, wherever he looked, beheld forests and trees. To give separate names to every one of those trees, would have been an endless and impracticable undertaking. The first object was, to give a name to that particular tree, whose fruit relieved his hunger, or whose shade protected him from the sun. But observing, that though other trees were distinguished from this by peculiar qualities of size or appearance, yet, that they also agreed and resembled one another, in certain common qualities, such as springing from a root, and bearing branches and leaves, he formed in his mind some general idea of those common qualities, and ranging all that possessed them under one class of objects, he called that whole class, *a tree.* Longer experience taught him to subdivide this genus into the several species of oak, pine, ash, and the rest, according as his observation extended to the several qualities in which these trees agreed or differed.

But, still, he made use only of general terms in speech. For the oak, the pine, and the ash, were names of whole classes of

* I do not mean to assert, that among all nations, the first invented words were simple and regular substantive nouns. Nothing is more difficult than to ascertain the precise steps by which men proceeded in the formation of language. Names for objects must, doubtless, have arisen in the most early stages of speech. But it is probable, as the learned author of the Treatise *On the Origin and Progress of Language* has shewn, (vol. i. p. 371. 395.) that, among several savage tribes, some of the first articulate sounds that were formed denoted a whole sentence rather than the name of a particular object; conveying some information, or expressing some desires or fears, suited to the circumstances in which that tribe was placed, or relating to the business they had most frequent occasion to carry on; as, the lion is coming, the river is swelling, &c. Many of their first words, it is likewise probable, were not simple substantive nouns, but substantives, accompanied with some of those attributes, in conjunction with which they were most frequently accustomed to behold them; as, the great bear, the little hut, the wound made by the hatchet, &c. Of all which the author produces instances from several of the American languages; and it is, undoubtedly, suitable to the natural course of the operations of the human mind, thus to begin with particulars the most obvious to sense, and to proceed from these to more general expressions. He likewise observes, that the words of those primitive tongues are far from being, as we might suppose them, rude and short, and crowded with consonants; but, on the contrary, are, for the most part, long words, and full of vowels. This is the consequence of their being formed upon the natural sounds which the voice utters with most ease, a little varied and distinguished by articulation; and he shews this to hold, in fact, among most of the barbarous languages which are known.

objects; each of which included an immense number of undistinguished individuals. Here then it appears, that though the formation of abstract, or general conceptions, is supposed to be a difficult operation of the mind; such conceptions must have entered into the very first formation of language. For, if we except only the proper names of persons, such as Cæsar, John, Peter, all the other substantive nouns which we employ in discourse are the names, not of individual objects, but of very extensive genera, or species of objects; as, man, lion, house, river, &c. We are not, however, to imagine, that this invention of general, or abstract terms, requires any great exertion of metaphysical capacity: for, by whatever steps the mind proceeds in it, it is certain, that, when men have once observed resemblances among objects, they are naturally inclined to call all those which resemble one another by one common name; and of course to class them under one species. We may daily observe this practised by children, in their first attempts towards acquiring language.

But now after language had proceeded as far as I have described, the notification which it made of objects was still very imperfect: for, when one mentioned to another, in discourse, any substantive noun, such as man, lion, or tree, how was it to be known, which man, which lion, or which tree, he meant, among the many compehended under one name? Here occurs a very curious, and a very useful contrivance for specifying the individual object intended, by means of that part of speech called the Article.

The force of the article consists, in pointing or singling out from the common mass, the individual of which we mean to speak. In English, we have two articles, *a* and *the; a* is more general and unlimited; *the* more definite and special. *A* is much the same with *one*, and marks only any one individual of a species: that individual being either unknown, or left undetermined; as, a lion, a king. *The,* which possesses more properly the force of the article, ascertains some known or determined individual of the species; as, the lion, the king.

Articles are words of great use in speech. In some languages, however, they are not found. The Greeks have but one article, ὁ ἡ τὸ, which answers to our definite, or proper article, *the*. They have no word which answers to our article *a;* but they supply its place by the absence of their article: thus, Βασιλευς signifies, *a* king; ὁ Βασιλευς *the* king. The Latins have no article. In the room of it they employ pronouns, as, hic, ille, iste, for pointing out the objects which they want to distinguish. 'Noster sermo,' says Quinctilian, 'articulos non desiderat, ideoque in alias partes orationis sparguntur.' This, however, appears to me a defect in the Latin tongue; as articles contribute much to the clearness and precision of language.

In order to illustrate this, remark what difference there is in the meaning of the following expressions in English, depending wholly on the different employment of the articles: 'The son of a king—The son of the king—A son of the king's.' Each of these three phrases has an entirely different meaning, which I need not explain, because any one who understands the language conceives it clearly at first hearing, through the different application of the articles, *a* and *the*. Whereas in Latin, 'Filius regis' is wholly undetermined; and, to explain in which of these three senses it is to be understood, for it may bear any of them, a circumlocution of several words must be used. In the same manner, 'Are you *a* king?' 'Are you *the* king?' are questions of quite separate import; which, however, are confounded together in the Latin phrase, 'Esne tu rex?' 'Thou art *a* man,' is a very general and harmless position; but, 'thou art *the* man,' is an assertion capable, we know, of striking terror and remorse into the heart. These observations illustrate the force and importance of articles: and, at the same time, I gladly lay hold of any opportunity of shewing the advantages of our own language.

Besides this quality of being particularised by the article, three affections belong to substantive nouns, number, gender, and case, which require our consideration.

Number distinguishes them as one, or many, of the same kind, called the singular and the plural; a distinction found in all languages, and which must, indeed, have been coeval with the very infancy of language; as there were few things which men had more frequent occasion to express, than the difference between one and many. For the greater facility of expressing it, it has, in all languages, been marked by some variation made upon the substantive noun; as we see, in English, our plural is commonly formed by the addition of the letter S. In the Hebrew, Greek, and some other ancient languages, we find, not only a plural, but a dual number; the rise of which may very naturally be accounted for, from separate terms of numbering not being yet invented, and one, two, and many, being all, or, at least, the chief, numeral distinctions which men, at first, had any occasion to take notice of.

Gender is an affection of substantive nouns, which will lead us into more discussion than number. Gender being founded on the distinction of the two sexes, it is plain, that in a proper sense, it can only find place in the names of living creatures, which admit the distinction of male and female; and, therefore, can be ranged under the masculine or feminine genders. All other substantive nouns ought to belong, to what grammarians call the Neuter Gender, which is meant to imply the negation of either sex. But, with respect to this distribution, somewhat singular hath obtained in the structure of language. For, in correspon-

dence to that distinction of male and female sex which runs through all the classes of animals, men have, in most languages, ranked a great number of inanimate objects also, under the like distinctions of masculine and feminine. Thus, we find it, both in the Greek and Latin tongues: *gladius*, a sword, for instance, is masculine; *sagitta*, an arrow, is feminine; and this assignation of sex to inanimate objects, this distinction of them into masculine and feminine, appears often to be entirely capricious; derived from no other principle than the casual structure of the language, which refers, to a certain gender, words of a certain termination. In the Greek and Latin, however, all inanimate objects are not distributed into masculine and feminine; but many of them are also classed, where all of them ought to have been, under the neuter gender; as, *templum*, a church; *sedile*, a seat.

But the genius of the French and Italian tongues differs, in this respect, from the Greek and Latin. In the French and Italian, from whatever cause it has happened, so it is, that the neuter gender is wholly unknown, and that all their names of inanimate objects are put upon the same footing with living creatures; and distributed, without exception, into masculine and feminine. The French have two articles, the masculine *le*, and the feminine *la;* and one or other of these is prefixed to all substantive nouns in the language, to denote their gender. The Italians make the same universal use of their articles *il* and *lo*, for the masculine; and *la* for the feminine.

In the English language it is remarkable that there obtains a peculiarity quite opposite. In the French and Italian there is no neuter gender. In the English, when we use common discourse, all substantive nouns, that are not names of living creatures, are neuter, without exception. *He*, *she*, and *it*, are the marks of the three genders; and we always use *it*, in speaking of any object where there is no sex, or where the sex is not known. The English is, perhaps, the only language in the known world (except the Chinese, which is said to gree with it in this particular) where the distinction of gender is properly and philosophically applied in the use of words, and confined, as it ought to be, to mark the real distinctions of male and female.

Hence arises a very great and signal advantage of the English tongue, which it is of consequence to remark.* Though in common discourse, as I have already observed, we employ only the proper and literal distinction of sexes; yet the genius of the language permits us, whenever it will add beauty to our discourse, to make the names of inanimate objects masculine and feminine in a metaphorical sense; and when we do so, we are under-

* The following observasions on the metaphorical use of genders in the English language, are taken from Mr. Harris's Hermes.

stood to quit the literal style, and to use one of the figures of discourse.

For instance; if I am speaking of virtue, in the course of ordinary conversation, or of strict reasoning, I refer the word to no sex or gender; I say, 'Virtue is its own reward;' or, 'it is the law of our nature.' But if I choose to rise into a higher tone; if I seek to embellish and animate my discourse, I give a sex to virtue; I say, 'She descends from heaven;' 'she alone confers true honour upon man;' 'her gifts are the only durable rewards.' By this means, we have it in our power to vary our style at pleasure. By making a very slight alteration, we can personify any object that we choose to introduce with dignity; and by this change of manner, we give warning, that we are passing from the strict and logical to the ornamented and rhetorical style.

This is an advantage which not only every poet, but every good writer and speaker in prose, is, on many occasions, glad to lay hold of, and improve; and it is an advantage peculiar to our tongue; no other language possesses it. For, in other languages, every word has one fixed gender, masculine, feminine, or neuter, which can, upon no occasion, be changed; *αρετη* for instance, in Greek; *virtus* in Latin; and *la vertu* in French; are uniformly feminine. *She* must always be the pronoun answering to the word, whether you be writing in poetry or in prose, whether you be using the style of reasoning, or that of declamation: whereas, in English, we can either express ourselves with the philosophical accuracy of giving no gender to things inanimate; or, by giving them gender, and transforming them into persons, we adapt them to the style of poetry, and, when it is proper, we enliven prose.

It deserves to be farther remarked on this subject, that, when we employ that liberty which our language allows, of ascribing sex to any inanimate object, we have not, however, the liberty of making it of what gender we please, masculine or feminine; but are, in general, subjected to some rule of gender which the currency of language has fixed to that object. The foundation of that rule is imagined, by Mr. Harris, in his 'Philosophical Inquiry into the Principles of Grammar,' to be laid in a certain distant resemblance or analogy to the natural distinction of the two sexes.

Thus, according to him, we commonly give the masculine gender to those substantive nouns used figuratively, which are conspicuous for the attributes of imparting, or communicating; which are by nature strong and efficacious, either to good or evil; or which have a claim to some eminence, whether laudable or not. Those, again, he imagines to be generally made feminine, which are conspicuous for the attributes of containing, and of bringing forth; which have more of the passive in their nature than of the

active; which are peculiarly beautiful or amiable; or which have respect to such excesses as are rather feminine than masculine. Upon these principles he takes notice, that the sun is always put in the masculine gender with us; the moon in the feminine, as being the receptacle of the sun's light. The earth is, universally, feminine. A ship, a country, a city, are likewise made feminine, as receivers or containers. God, in all languages, is masculine. Time, we make masculine, on account of its mighty efficacy; virtue, feminine, from its beauty, and its being the object of love. Fortune is always feminine. Mr. Harris imagines, that the reasons which determine the gender of such capital words as these, hold in most other languages as well as the English. This, however, appears doubtful. A variety of circumstances, which seemed casual to us, because we cannot reduce them to principles, must, unquestionably, have influenced the original formation of languages; and in no article whatever does language appear to have been more capricious, and to have proceeded less according to fixed rule, than in the imposition of gender upon things inanimate; especially among such nations as have applied the distinction of masculine and feminine to all substantive nouns.

Having discussed gender, I proceed, next, to another remarkable peculiarity of substantive nouns, which, in the style of grammar, is called their declension by cases. Let us, first, consider what cases signify. In order to understand this, it is necessary to observe, that, after men had given names to external objects, had particularized them by means of the article, and distinguished them by number and gender, still their language remained extremely imperfect, till they had derived some method of expressing the relations which those objects bore, one towards another. They would find it of little use to have a name for man, lion, tree, river, without being able, at the same time, to signify how these stood with respect to each other; whether, as approaching to, receding from, joined with, and the like. Indeed, the relations which objects bear to one another are immensely numerous; and therefore, to devise names for them all, must have been among the last and most difficult refinements of language. But, in its most early periods, it was absolutely necessary to express, in some way or other, such relations as were most important, and as occurred most frequently in common speech. Hence the genitive, dative, and ablative cases of nouns, which express the noun itself, together with those relations, *of*, *to*, *from*, *with*, and *by*; the relations which we have the most frequent occasion to mention. The proper idea, then, of cases in declension, is no other than an expression of the state, or relation, which one object bears to another, denoted by some variation made upon the name of that object;

most commonly in the final letters, and by some languages in the initial.

All languages, however, do not agree in this mode of expression. The Greek, Latin, and several other languages, use declension. The English, French, and Italian, do not; or, at most, use it very imperfectly. In place of the variations of cases, the modern tongues express the relations of objects, by means of the words called Prepositions, which denote those relations, prefixed to the name of the object. English nouns have no case whatever, except a sort of genitive, commonly formed by the addition of the letter *s* to the noun; as when we say 'Dryden's Poems,' meaning the Poems of Dryden. Our personal pronouns have also a case, which answers to the accusative of Latin, *I, me,—he, him,—who, whom.* There is nothing, then, or at least very little, in the grammar of our language, which corresponds to declension in the ancient languages.

Two questions, respecting this subject, may be put. First, Which of these methods of expressing relations, whether that by declension, or that by prepositions, was the most ancient usage in language? And next, Which of them has the best effect? Both methods, it is plain, are the same as to the sense, and differ only in form. For the significancy of the Roman language would not have been altered, though the nouns, like ours, had been without cases, provided they had employed prepositions; and though, to express a disciple of Plato, they had said, 'Discipulus de Plato,' like the modern Italians, in place of 'Discipulus Platonis.'

Now, with respect to the antiquity of cases, although they may, on first view, seem to constitute a more artificial method than the other, of denoting relations, yet there are strong reasons for thinking that this was the earliest method practised by men. We find, in fact, that declensions and cases are used in most of what are called the mother-tongues, or original languages, as well as in the Greek and Latin. And a very natural and satisfying account can be given why this usage should have early obtained. Relations are the most abstract and metaphysical ideas of any which men have occasion to form when they are considered by themselves, and separated from the related object. It would puzzle any man, as has been well observed by an author on this subject, to give a distinct account of what is meant by such a word as *of*, or *from*, when it stands by itself, and to explain all that may be included under it. The first rude inventors of language, therefore, would not, for a long while, arrive at such general terms. In place of considering any relation in the abstract, and devising a name for it, they would much more easily conceive it in conjunction with a particular object; and they would express their conceptions

of it, by varying the name of that object through all the different cases; *hominis,* of a man; *homini,* to a man; *homine,* with a man, &c.

But, though this method of declension was probably the only method which men employed at first for denoting relations, yet, in progress of time, many other relations being observed, besides those which are signified by the cases of nouns, and men also becoming more capable of general and metaphysical ideas, separate names were gradually invented for all the relations which occurred, forming that part of speech which we now call Prepositions. Prepositions being once introduced, they were found to be capable of supplying the place of cases, by being prefixed to the nominative of the noun. Hence it came to pass, that, as nations were intermixed by migrations and conquests, and were obliged to learn, and adopt, the languages of one another, prepositions supplanted the use of cases and declensions. When the Italian tongue, for instance, sprung out of the Roman, it was found more easy and simple, by the Gothic nations, to accommodate a few prepositions to the nominative of every noun, and to say, *di Roma, a Roma, di Carthago, a Carthago,* than to remember all the variety of terminations, *Romæ, Romam, Carthaginis, Carthaginem,* which the use of declensions required in the ancient nouns. By this progress we can give a natural account how nouns, in our modern tongues, come to be so void of declension: a progress which is fully illustrated in Dr. Adam Smith's ingenious Dissertation on the Formation of Languages.

With regard to the other question on this subject, Which of these two methods is of the greater utility and beauty? we shall find advantages and disadvantages to be balanced on both sides. There is no doubt that, by abolishing cases, we have rendered the structure of modern languages more simple. We have disembarrassed it of all the intricacy which arose from the different forms of declension, of which the Romans had no fewer than five; and from all the irregularities in these several declensions. We have thereby rendered our languages more easy to be acquired, and less subject to the perplexity of rules. But, though the simplicity and ease of language be great and estimable advantages, yet there are also such disadvantages attending the modern method, as leave the balance, on the whole doubtful, or rather incline it to the side of antiquity.

For, in the first place, by our constant use of prepositions for expressing the relations of things, we have filled language with a multitude of those little words, which are eternally occurring in every sentence, and may be thought thereby to have encumbered speech, by an addition of terms; and, by rendering it more prolix, to have enervated its force. In the second place, we have cer-

tainly rendered the sound of language less agreeable to the ear, by depriving it of that variety and sweetness which arose from the length of words, and the change of terminations, occasioned by the cases in the Greek and Latin. But, in the third place, the most material disadvantage is, that, by this abolition of cases, and by a similar alteration, of which I am to speak in the next Lecture, in the conjugation of verbs, we have deprived ourselves of that liberty of transposition in the arrangement of words which the ancient languages enjoyed.

In the ancient tongues, as I formerly observed, the different terminations, produced by declension and conjugation, pointed out the reference of the several words of a sentence to one another, without the aid of juxtaposition; suffered them to be placed, without ambiguity, in whatever order was most suited to give force to the meaning, or harmony to the sound. But now, having none of those marks of relation incorporated with the words themselves, we have no other way left us for shewing what words in a sentence are most closely connected in meaning, than that of placing them close by one another in the period. The meaning of the sentence is brought out in separate members and portions; it is broken down and divided. Whereas the structure of the Greek and Roman sentences, by the government of their nouns and verbs, presented the meaning so interwoven and compounded in all its parts, as to make us perceive it in one united view. The closing words of the period ascertained the relation of each member to another; and all that ought to be connected in our idea, appeared connected in the expression. Hence more brevity, more vivacity, more force. That luggage of particles (as an ingenious author happily expresses it) which we are obliged always to carry along with us, both clogs style, and enfeebles sentiment.*

Pronouns are the class of words most nearly related to substantive nouns; being, as the name imports, representatives, or substitutes, of nouns. *I*, *thou*, *he*, *she*, and *it*, are no other than an abridged

* 'The various terminations of the same word, whether verb or noun, are always conceived to be more intimately connected with the term which they serve to lengthen, than the additional, detached, and in themselves insignificant particles, which we are obliged to employ as connectives to our significant words. Our method gives almost the same exposure to the one as to the other, making the significant parts, and the insignificant, equally conspicuous; theirs much oftener sinks, as it were, the former into the latter, at once preserving their use, and hiding their weakness. Our modern languages may, in this respect, be compared to the art of the carpenter in its rudest state; when the union of the materials employed by the artisan, could be effected only by the help of those external and coarse implements, pins, nails, and cramps. The ancient languages resemble the same art in its most improved state, after the invention of dovetail joints, grooves, and mortices; when thus all the principal junctions are effected, by forming, properly, the extremities, or terminations of the pieces to be joined. For, by means of these, the union of the parts is rendered closer; while that by which that union is produced is scarcely perceivable.' The Philosophy of Rhetoric, by Dr. Campbell, vol. ii. p. 412.

way of naming the persons, or objects, with which we have immediate intercourse, or to which we are obliged frequently to refer in discourse. Accordingly, they are subject to the same modifications with substantive nouns, of number, gender, and case. Only, with respect to gender, we may observe, that the pronouns of the first and second person, as they are called, *I* and *thou*, do not appear to have had the distinctions of gender given them in any language; for this plain reason, that as they always refer to persons who are present to each other when they speak, their sex must appear, and therefore needs not be marked by a masculine or feminine pronoun But as the third person may be absent, or unknown, the distinction of gender there becomes necessary; and accordingly, in English, it hath all the three genders belonging to it; *he, she, it.* As to cases; even those languages which have dropped them in substantive nouns, sometimes retain more of them in pronouns, for the sake of the greater readiness in expressing relations; as pronouns are words of such frequent occurrence in discourse. In English, most of our grammarians hold the personal pronouns to have two cases, besides the nominative; a genitive, and an accusative.—*I, mine, me;—thou, thine, thee;—he, his, him;—who, whose, whom.*

In the first stage of speech, it is probable that the places of those pronouns were supplied by pointing to the object when present, and naming it when absent. For one can hardly think that pronouns were of early invention; as they are words of such a particular and artificial nature. *I, thou, he, it,* it is to be observed, are not names peculiar to any single object, but so very general, that they may be applied to all persons, or objects, whatever, in certain circumstances. *It* is the most general term that can possibly be conceived, as it may stand for any one thing in the universe of which we speak. At the same time, these pronouns have this quality, that, in the circumstances in which they are applied, they never denote more than one precise individual; which they ascertain, and specify, much in the same manner as is done by the article. So that pronouns are, at once, the most general, and the most particular words in language. They are commonly the most irregular and troublesome words to the learner, in the grammar of all tongues; as being the words most in common use, and subjected thereby to the greatest varieties.

Adjectives, or terms of quality, such as *great, little, black, white, yours, ours,* are the plainest and simplest of all that class of words which are termed attributive. They are found in all languages; and, in all languages, must have been very early invented; as objects could not be distinguished from one another, nor any intercourse be carried on concerning them, till once names were given to their different qualities.

I have nothing to observe in relation to them, except that singularity which attends them in the Greek and Latin, of having the same form given them with substantive nouns; being declined, like them, by cases, and subjected to the like distinctions of number and gender. Hence, it has happened, that grammarians have made them belong to the same part of speech, and divided the noun into substantive and adjective; an arrangement founded more on attention to the external form of words, than to their nature and force. For adjectives, or terms of quality, have not, by their nature, the least resemblance to substantive nouns, as they never express any thing which can possibly subsist by itself; which is the very essence of the substantive noun. They are, indeed, more akin to verbs, which, like them, express the attribute of some substance.

It may, at first view, appear somewhat odd and fantastic, that adjectives should, in the ancient languages, have assumed so much the form of substantives; since neither number, nor gender, nor cases, nor relations, have any thing to do, in a proper sense, with mere qualities, such as *good* or *great, soft* or *hard*. And yet *bonus*, and *magnus*, and *tener*, have their singular and plural, their masculine and feminine, their genitives and datives, like any of the names of substantives, or persons. But this can be accounted for, from the genius of those tongues. They avoided as much as possible, considering qualities separately, or in the abstract. They made them a part, or appendage, of the substance which they served to distinguish; they made the adjective depend on its substantive, and resemble it in termination, in number, and gender, in order that the two might coalesce the more intimately, and be joined in the form of expression, as they were in the nature of things. The liberty of transposition, too, which those languages indulged, required such a method as this to be followed. For, allowing the related words of a sentence to be placed at a distance from each other, it required the relation of adjectives to their proper substantives to be pointed out, by such similar circumstances of form and termination, as, according to the grammatical style, should shew their concordance. When I say, in English, the 'beautiful wife of a brave man,' the juxtaposition of the words prevents all ambiguity. But when I say, in Latin, 'Formosa fortis viri uxor;' it is only the agreement, in gender, number, and case, of the adjective '*formosa*,' which is the first word of the sentence, with the substantive '*uxor*,' which is the last word, that declares the meaning.

LECTURE IX.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.—ENGLISH TONGUE.

Of the whole class of words that are called attributive, indeed, of all the parts of speech, the most complex, by far, is the verb. It is chiefly in this part of speech that the subtle and profound metaphysic of language appears; and, therefore, in examining the nature and different variations of the verb, there might be room for ample discussion. But as I am sensible, that such grammatical discussions, when they are pursued far, become intricate and obscure, I shall avoid dwelling any longer on this subject than seems absolutely necessary.

The verb is so far of the same nature with the adjective, that it expresses, like it, an attribute, or property, of some person or thing. But it does more than this. For, in all verbs, in every language, there are no less than three things implied at once; the attribute of some substantive, an affirmation concerning that attribute, and time. Thus, when I say, 'the sun shineth;' shining is the attribute ascribed to the sun; the present time is marked; and an affirmation is included, that this property of shining belongs, at that time, to the sun. The particle 'shining,' is merely an adjective, which denotes an attribute, or property, and also expresses time; but carries no affirmation. The infinitive mood, 'to shine,' may be called the name of the verb; it carries neither time nor affirmation, but simply expresses that attribute, action, or state of things, which is to be the subject of the other moods and tenses. Hence, the infinitive often carries the resemblance of a substantive noun; and, both in English and Latin, is sometimes constructed as such. As, 'scire tuum nihil est.' 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.' And, in English, in the same manner: 'To write well is difficult; to speak eloquently is still more difficult.' But as, through all the other tenses and moods, the affirmation runs, and is essential to them; 'the sun shineth, was shining, shone, will shine, would have shone,' &c. the affirmation seems to be that which chiefly distinguishes the verb from the other parts of speech, and gives it its most conspicuous power. Hence there can be no sentence, or complete proposition, without a verb either expressed or implied. For, whenever we speak, we always mean to assert, that something is, or is not; and the word which carries this assertion, or affirmation, is a verb. From this sort of eminence belonging to it, this part of speech hath received its name, verb, from the Latin, *verbum*, or *the word*, by way of distinction.

Verbs, therefore, from their importance and necessity in speech,

must have been coëval with men's first attempts towards the formation of language: though, indeed, it must have been the work of long time, to rear them up to that accurate and complex structure which they now possess. It seems very probable, as Dr. Smith has suggested, that the radical verb, or the first form of it, in most languages, would be, what we now call, the Impersonal verb. 'It rains; it thunders; it is light; it is agreeable;' and the like; as this is the very simplest form of the verb, and merely affirms the existence of an event, or of a state of things. By degrees, after pronouns were invented, such verbs became personal, and were branched out into all the variety of tenses and moods.

The tenses of the verb are contrived to imply the several distinctions of time. Of these I must take some notice, in order to shew the admirable accuracy with with language is constructed. We think commonly of no more than the three great divisions of time, into the past, the present, and the future: and we might imagine, that if verbs had been so contrived, as simply to express these, no more was needful. But language proceeds with much greater subtilty. It splits time into its several moments. It considers time as never standing still, but always flowing; things past, as more or less perfectly completed; and things future, as more or less remote, by different gradations. Hence the great variety of tenses in most tongues.

The present may, indeed, be always considered as one indivisible point, susceptible of no variety. 'I write, or I am writing; *scribo*.' But it is not so with the past. There is no language so poor, but it hath two or three tenses to express the varieties of it. Ours hath no fewer than four. 1. A past action may be considered as left unfinished; which makes the imperfect tense, 'I was writing; *scribebam*.' 2. As just now finished. This makes the proper perfect tense; which in English, is always expressed by the help of the auxiliary verb, 'I have written.' 3. It may be considered as finished some time ago; the particular time left indefinite. 'I wrote; *scripsi*;' which may either signify, 'I wrote yesterday, or I wrote a twelvemonth ago.' This is what grammarians call an aörist, or indefinite past. 4. It may be considered as finished before something else, which is also past. This is the plusquamperfect. 'I had written, *scripseram*. I had written before I had received his letter.'

Here we observe, with some pleasure, that we have an advantage over the Latins, who have only three varieties upon the past time. They have no proper perfect tense, or one which distinguishes an action just now finished, from an action that was finished some time ago. In both these cases they must say, '*scripsi*.' Though there be a manifest difference in the tenses,

which our language expresses by this variation, 'I have written,' meaning, I have just now finished writing: and, 'I wrote,' meaning, at some former time, since which, other things have intervened. This difference the Romans have no tense to express; and, therefore, can only do it by a circumlocution.

The chief varieties in the future time are two; a simple or indefinite future. 'I shall write; *scribam*;' and a future, relating to something else, which is also future. 'I shall have written; *scripsero*.' I shall have written before he arrives.*

Besides tenses, or the power of expressing time, verbs admit the distinction of voices, as they are called, the active and the passive: according as the affirmation respects something that is done, or something that is suffered; 'I love, or I am loved.' They admit also the distinction of moods, which are designed to express the affirmation, whether active or passive, under different forms. The indicative mood, for instance, simply declares a proposition, 'I write; I have written;' the imperative requires, commands, threatens, 'write thou; let him write.' The subjunctive expresses the proposition under the form of a condition, or in subordination to some other thing, to which a reference is made, 'I might write, I could write, I should write, if the case were so and so.' This manner of expressing an affirmation, under so many different forms, together also with the distinction of the three persons, *I*, *thou*, and *he*, constitutes what is called the conjugation of verbs, which makes so great a part of the grammar of all languages.

It now clearly appears, as I before observed, that, of all the parts of speech, verbs are, by far, the most artificial and complex. Consider only, how many things are denoted by this single Latin word, '*amavissem*, I would have loved.' First, The person who speaks, 'I.' Secondly, An attribute, or action of that person, 'loving.' Thirdly, An affirmation concerning that action. Fourthly, The past time denoted in that affirmation, 'have loved:' and Fifthly, A condition on which the action is suspended, 'would have loved.' It appears curious and remarkable, that words of this complex import, and with more or less of this artificial structure, are to be found, as far as we know, in all languages of the world.

Indeed the form of conjugation, or the manner of expressing all these varieties in the verb, differs greatly in different tongues. Conjugation is esteemed most perfect in those languages which, by varying either the termination or the initial syllable of the verb, express the greatest number of important circumstances, without the help of auxiliary words. In the oriental tongues, the verbs are said to have few tenses, or expressions of time; but then

* On the tenses of verbs, Mr. Harris's Hermes may be consulted, by such as desire to see them scrutinized with metaphysical accuracy; and also, the Treatise on the Origin and Progress of Language, vol. ii. p. 125.

their moods are so contrived, as to express a great variety of circumstances and relations. In the Hebrew, for instance, they say, in one word, without the help of any auxiliary, not only, 'I have taught,' but, 'I have taught exactly, or often; I have been commanded to teach; I have taught myself.' The Greek, which is the most perfect of all the known tongues, is very regular and complete in all the tenses and moods. The Latin is formed on the same model, but more imperfect, especially in the passive voice, which forms most of the tenses by the help of the auxiliary '*sum.*'

In all the modern European tongues, conjugation is very defective. They admit few varieties in the termination of the verb itself; but have almost constant recourse to their auxiliary verbs, throughout all the moods and tenses, both active and passive. Language has undergone a change in conjugation, perfectly similar to that which I shewed in the last Lecture, it underwent with respect to declension. As prepositions, prefixed to the noun, superseded the use of cases; so the two great auxiliary verbs, to *have*, and to *be*, with those other auxiliaries, which we use in English, *do*, *shall*, *will*, *may*, and *can*, prefixed to the participle, supersede, in a great measure, the different terminations of moods and tenses, which formed the ancient conjugations.

The alteration, in both cases, was owing to the same cause, and will be easily understood, from reflecting on what was formerly observed. The auxiliary verbs are like prepositions, words of a very general and abstract nature. They imply the different modifications of simple existence considered alone, and without reference to any particular thing. In the early state of speech, the import of them would be incorporated with every particular verb in its tenses and moods, long before words were invented for denoting such abstract conceptions of existence, alone, and by themselves. But after those auxiliary verbs came, in the progress of language, to be invented and known, and to have tenses and moods given to them like other verbs; it was found, that as they carried in their nature the force of that affirmation which distinguishes the verb, they might, by being joined with the participle, which gives the meaning of the verb, supply the place of most of the moods and tenses. Hence, as the modern tongues began to rise out of the ruins of the ancient, this method established itself, in the new formation of speech. Such words, for instance, as *am*, *was*, *have*, *shall*, being once familiar, it appeared more easy to apply these to any verb whatever; as, *I am loved; I was loved; I have loved;* than to remember that variety of terminations which were requisite in conjugating the ancient verbs, *amor*, *amabar*, *amavi*, &c. Two or three varieties only, in the termination of the verb, were retained, as, *love*, *loved*, *loving;* and all the rest were dropped. The consequence, however, of this practice was the same as that

of abolishing declensions. It rendered language more simple and easy in its structure; but withal more prolix, and less graceful. *This finishes, all that seemed most necessary to be observed with respect to verbs.*

The remaining parts of speech, which are called the indeclinable parts, or that admit of no variations, will not detain us long.

Adverbs are the first that occur. These form a very numerous class of words in every language, reducible, in general, to the head of attributives; as they serve to modify, or to denote, some circumstance of an action, or of a quality, relative to its time, place, order, degree, and the other properties of it, which we have occasion to specify. They are, for the most part, no more than an abridged mode of speech, expressing, by one word, what might, by a circumlocution, be resolved into two or more words belonging to the other parts of speech. 'Exceedingly,' for instance, is the same as 'in a high degree;' 'bravely,' the same as 'with bravery or valour;' 'here,' the same as 'in this place;' 'often, and seldom,' the same as 'for many, and for few times:' and so of the rest. Hence, adverbs may be conceived as of less necessity, and of later introduction into the system of speech, than many other classes of words; and, accordingly, the great body of them are derived from other words formerly established in the language.

Prepositions and conjunctions are words more essential to discourse than the greatest part of adverbs. They form that class of words, called connectives, without which there could be no language; serving to express the relations which things bear to one another, their mutual influence, dependencies, and coherence; thereby joining words together into intelligible and significant propositions. Conjunctions are generally employed for connecting sentences, or members of sentences; as, *and, because, although,* and the like. Prepositions are employed for connecting words, by shewing the relation which one substantive noun bears to another; as *of, from, to, above, below,* &c. Of the force of these I had occasion to speak before, when treating of the cases and declensions of substantive nouns.

It is abundantly evident, that all these connective particles must be of the greatest use in speech; seeing they point out the relations and transitions by which the mind passes from one idea to another. They are the foundation of all reasoning, which is no other thing than the connexion of thoughts. And, therefore, though among barbarous nations, and in the rude uncivilized ages of the world, the stock of these words might be small, it must always have increased, as mankind advanced in the arts of reasoning and reflection. The more that any nation is improved by science, and the more perfect their language becomes, we may naturally expect, that it will abound more with connective particles; expressing relations of

things, and transitions of thought, which had escaped a grosser view. Accordingly, no tongue is so full of them as the Greek, in consequence of the acute and subtile genius of that refined people. In every language, much of the beauty and strength of it depends on the proper use of conjunctions, prepositions, and those relative pronouns, which also serve the same purpose of connecting the different parts of discourse. It is the right or wrong management of these, which chiefly makes discourse appear firm and compacted, or disjointed and loose; which carries it on in its progress with a smooth and even pace, or renders its march irregular and desultory.

I shall dwell no longer on the general construction of language. Allow me, only, before I dismiss the subject, to observe, that dry and intricate as it may seem to some, it is, however, of great importance, and very nearly connected with the philosophy of the human mind. For, if speech be the vehicle, or interpreter of the conceptions of our minds, an examination of its structure and progress cannot but unfold many things concerning the nature and progress of our conceptions themselves, and the operations of our faculties; a subject that is always instructive to man. 'Nequis,' says Quinctilian, an author of excellent judgment, 'nequis tanquam parva fastidiat grammatices elementa. Non quia magnæ sit operæ consonantes a vocalibus discernere, easque in semivocalium numerum, mutarumque partiri, sed quia interiora velut sacri hujus adeuntibus, apparebit multa rerum subtilitas, quæ non modo acuere ingenia puerilia, sed exercere altissimam quoque eruditionem ac scientiam possit.* i. 4.

Let us now come nearer to our own language. In this, and the preceding Lecture, some observations have already been made on its structure. But it is proper that we should be a little more particular in the examination of it.

The language which is, at present, spoken throughout Great Britain, is neither the ancient primitive speech of the island, nor derived from it; but is altogether of foreign origin. The language of the first inhabitants of our island, beyond doubt, was the Celtic, or Gaelic, common to them with Gaul; from which country, it appears, by many circumstances, that Great Britain was peopled. This Celtic tongue, which is said to be very expressive, and copious, and is, probably, one of the most ancient languages in the world, obtained once in most of the western regions of Europe. It was the language of Gaul, of Great Britain, of Ireland, and,

* Let no man despise, as inconsiderable, the elements of grammar, because it may seem to him a matter of small consequence, to shew the distinction between vowels and consonants, and to divide the latter into liquids and mutes. But they who penetrate into the innermost parts of this temple of science, will there discover such refinement and subtilty of matter, as is not only proper to sharpen the understandings of young men, but sufficient to give exercise for the most profound knowledge and erudition.

very probably, of Spain also; till, in the course of those revolutions, which, by means of the conquests, first, of the Romans, and afterwards, of the northern nations, changed the government, speech, and, in a manner, the whole face of Europe, this tongue was gradually obliterated; and now subsists only in the mountains of Wales, in the highlands of Scotland, and among the wild Irish. For the Irish, the Welsh, and the Erse, are no other than different dialects of the same tongue, the ancient Celtic.

This, then, was the language of the primitive Britons, the first inhabitants that we know of, in our island; and continued so till the arrival of the Saxons in England, in the year of our Lord 450; who, having conquered the Britons, did not intermix with them, but expelled them from their habitations, and drove them, together with their language, into the mountains of Wales. The Saxons were one of those northern nations that overran Europe; and their tongue, a dialect of the Gothic or Teutonic, altogether distinct from the Celtic, laid the foundation of the present English tongue. With some intermixture of Danish, a language, probably, from the same root with the Saxon, it continued to be spoken throughout the southern part of the island, till the time of William the Conqueror. He introduced his Norman or French as the language of the court, which made a considerable change in the speech of the nation; and the English which was spoken afterward, and continues to be spoken now, is a mixture of the ancient Saxon, and this Norman French, together with such new and foreign words as commerce and learning have, in progress of time, gradually introduced.

The history of the English language can, in this manner, be clearly traced. The language spoken in the low countries of Scotland, is now, and has been for many centuries, no other than a dialect of the English. How, indeed, or by what steps, the ancient Celtic tongue came to be banished from the low country in Scotland, and to make its retreat into the highlands and islands, cannot be so well pointed out, as how the like revolution was brought about in England. Whether the southernmost part of Scotland was once subject to the Saxons, and formed a part of the kingdom of Northumberland; or, whether the great number of English exiles that retreated into Scotland, upon the Norman conquest, and upon other occasions, introduced into that country their own language, which afterward, by the mutual intercourse of the two nations, prevailed over the Celtic, are uncertain and contested points, the discussion of which would lead us too far from our subject.

From what has been said, it appears, that the Teutonic dialect is the basis of our present speech. It has been imported among us in three different forms, the Saxon, the Danish, and the Norman;

all which have mingled together in our language. A very great number of our words, too, are plainly derived from the Latin. These we had not directly from the Latin, but most of them, it is probable, entered into our tongue, through the channel of that Norman French, which William the Conqueror introduced. For, as the Romans had long been in full possession of Gaul, the language spoken in that country, when it was invaded by the Franks and Normans, was a sort of corrupted Latin, mingled with Celtic, to which was given the name of Romanshe: and as the Franks and Normans did not, like the Saxons in England, expel the inhabitants, but, after their victories, mingled with them; the language of the country became a compound of the Teutonic dialect imported by these conquerors, and of the former corrupted Latin. Hence, the French language has always continued to have a very considerable affinity with the Latin; and hence, a great number of words of Latin origin, which were in use among the Normans in France, were introduced into our tongue at the Conquest; to which, indeed, many have since been added, directly from the Latin, in consequence of the great diffusion of Roman literature throughout all Europe.

From the influx of so many streams, from the junction of so many dissimilar parts, it naturally follows, that the English, like every compounded language, must needs be somewhat irregular. We cannot expect from it that correspondence of parts, that complete analogy in structure, which may be found in those simpler languages, which have been formed in a manner within themselves, and built on one foundation. Hence, as I before shewed, it has but small remains of conjugation or declension; and its syntax is narrow, as there are few marks in the words themselves that can shew their relation to each other, or, in the grammatical style, point out either their concordance, or their government, in the sentence. Our words having been brought to us from several different regions, straggle, if we may so speak, asunder from each other; and do not coalesce so naturally in the structure of a sentence, as the words in the Greek and Roman tongues.

But these disadvantages, if they be such, of a compound language, are balanced by other advantages that attend it; particularly, by the number and variety of words with which such a language is likely to be enriched. Few languages are, in fact, more copious than the English. In all grave subjects especially, historical, critical, political, and moral, no writer has the least reason to complain of the barrenness of our tongue. The studious reflecting genius of the people, has brought together great store of expressions, on such subjects, from every quarter. We are rich too in the language of poetry. Our poetical style differs widely from prose, not in point of numbers only, but in the very words them-

selves; which shews what a stock and compass of words we have it in our power to select and employ, suited to those different occasions. Herein, we are infinitely superior to the French, whose poetical language, if it were not distinguished by rhyme, would not be known to differ from their ordinary prose.

It is chiefly, indeed, on grave subjects, and with respect to the stronger emotions of the mind, that our language displays its power of expression. We are said to have thirty words, at least, for denoting all the varieties of the passion of anger.* But, in describing the more delicate sentiments and emotions, our tongue is not so fertile. It must be confessed, that the French language far surpasses ours, in expressing the nicer shades of character; especially those varieties of manner, temper, and behaviour, which are displayed in our social intercourse with one another. Let any one attempt to translate, into English, only a few pages of one of Marivaux's novels, and he will soon be sensible of our deficiency of expressions on these subjects. Indeed, no language is so copious as the French for whatever is delicate, gay, and amusing. It is, perhaps, the happiest language for conversation in the known world; but, on the higher subjects of composition, the English may be justly esteemed to excel it considerably.

Language is generally understood to receive its predominant tincture from the national character of the people who speak it. We must not, indeed, expect that it will carry an exact and full impression of their genius and manners; for, among all nations, the original stock of words which they received from their ancestors, remains as the foundation of their speech throughout many ages, while their manners undergo, perhaps, very great alterations. National character will, however, always have some perceptible influence on the turn of language; and the gaiety and vivacity of the French, and the gravity and thoughtfulness of the English, are sufficiently impressed on their respective tongues.

From the genius of our language, and the character of those who speak it, it may be expected to have strength and energy. It is, indeed, naturally prolix; owing to the great number of particles and auxiliary verbs which we are obliged constantly to employ; and this prolixity must, in some degree, enfeeble it. We seldom can express so much by one word as was done by the verbs, and by the nouns, in the Greek and Roman languages. Our style is less compact; our conceptions being spread out among more words, and split, as it were, into more parts, make a fainter impression when we utter them. Notwithstanding this defect, by

* Anger, wrath, passion, rage, fury, outrage, fierceness, sharpness, animosity, choler, resentment, heat, heartburning; to fume, storm, inflame, be incensed; to vex, kindle, irritate, enrage, exasperate, provoke, fret; to be sullen, hasty, hot, rough, sour, peevish, &c.—Preface to Greenwood's Grammar.

our abounding in terms for expressing all the strong emotions of the mind, and by the liberty which we enjoy, in a greater degree than most nations, of compounding words, our language may be esteemed to possess considerable force of expression; comparatively, at least, with the other modern tongues, though much below the ancient. The style of Milton alone, both in poetry and prose, is a sufficient proof, that the English tongue is far from being destitute of nerves and energy.

The flexibility of a language, or its power of accommodation to different styles and manners, so as to be either grave and strong, or easy and flowing, or tender and gentle, or pompous and magnificent, as occasions require, or as an author's genius prompts, is a quality of great importance in speaking and writing. It seems to depend upon three things; the copiousness of a language; the different arrangements of which its words are susceptible; and the variety and beauty of the sound of those words, so as to correspond to many different subjects. Never did any tongue possess this quality so eminently as the Greek, which every writer of genius could so mould, as to make the style perfectly expressive of his own manner and peculiar turn. It had all the three requisites, which I have mentioned as necessary for this purpose. It joined to these the graceful variety of its different dialects; and thereby readily assumed every sort of character which an author could wish, from the most simple and most familiar, up to the most majestic. The Latin, though a very beautiful language, is inferior, in this respect, to the Greek. It has more of a fixed character of stateliness and gravity. It is always firm and masculine in the tenor of its sound; and is supported by a certain senatorial dignity, of which it is difficult for a writer to divest it wholly, on any occasion. Among the modern tongues, the Italian possesses a great deal more of this flexibility than the French. By its copiousness, its freedom of arrangement, and the great beauty and harmony of its sounds, it suits itself very happily to most subjects, either in prose or in poetry; is capable of the august and the strong, as well as the tender; and seems to be, on the whole, the most perfect of all the modern dialects which have arisen out of the ruins of the ancient. Our own language, though not equal to the Italian in flexibility, yet is not destitute of a considerable degree of this quality. If any one will consider the diversity of style which appears in some of our classics, that great difference of manner, for instance, which is marked by the style of Lord Shaftesbury, and that of Dean Swift, he will see, in our tongue, such a circle of expression, such a power of accommodation to the different taste of writers, as redounds not a little to its honour.

What the English has been most taxed with is its deficiency in harmony of sound. But though every native is apt to be partial

to the sounds of his own language, and may therefore be suspected of not being a fair judge in this point; yet, I imagine, there are evident grounds on which it may be shewn, that this charge against our tongue has been carried too far. The melody of our versification, its power of supporting poetical numbers, without any assistance from rhyme, is alone a sufficient proof that our language is far from being unmusical. Our verse is, after the Italian, the most diversified and harmonious of any of the modern dialects; unquestionably far beyond the French verse, in variety, sweetness, and melody. Mr. Sheridan has shewn, in his Lectures, that we abound more in vowel and diphthong sounds than most languages; and these too, so divided into long and short, as to afford a proper diversity in the quantity of our syllables. Our consonants, he observes, which appear so crowded to the eye on paper, often form combinations not disagreeable to the ear in pronouncing; and, in particular, the objection which has been made to the frequent recurrence of the hissing consonant *s* in our language, is unjust and ill-founded. For, it has not been attended to, that very commonly, and in the final syllables especially, this letter loses altogether the hissing sound, and is transformed into a *z*, which is one of the sounds on which the ear rests with pleasure; as in *has, these, those, loves, hears*, and innumerable more, where, though the letter *s* be retained in writing, it has really the power of *z*, not of the common *s*.

After all, however, it must be admitted, that smoothness, or beauty of sound, is not one of the distinguishing properties of the English tongue. Though not incapable of being formed into melodious arrangements, yet strength and expressiveness, more than grace, form its character. We incline, in general, to a short pronunciation of our words, and have shortened the quantity of most of those which we borrow from the Latin, as *orator, spectacle, theatre, liberty*, and such-like. Agreeable to this, is a remarkable peculiarity of English pronunciation, the throwing the accent farther back, that is, nearer the beginning of the word, than is done by any other nation. In Greek and Latin, no word is accented farther back than the third syllable from the end, or what is called the antepenult. But, in English, we have many words accented on the fourth, some on the fifth syllable from the end, as 'mémorable,' 'convéniency,' 'ámbulatory,' 'prófitableness.' The general effect of this practice of hastening the accent, or placing it so near the beginning of the word, is to give a brisk and a spirited, but at the same time a rapid and hurried, and not very musical tone to the whole pronunciation of a people.

The English tongue possesses, undoubtedly, this property, that it is the most simple in its form and construction, of all the European dialects. It is free from all intricacy of cases, declensions,

moods, and tenses. Its words are subject to fewer variations from their original form than those of any other language. Its substantives have no distinction of gender, except what nature has made, and but one variation in case. Its adjectives admit of no change at all except what expresses the degree of comparison. Its verbs, instead of running through all the varieties of ancient conjugation, suffer no more than four or five changes in termination. By the help of a few prepositions and auxiliary verbs, all the purposes of significancy in meaning are accomplished; while the words, for the most part, preserve their form unchanged. The disadvantages, in point of elegance, brevity, and force, which follow from this structure of our language, I have before pointed out. But, at the same time, it must be admitted, that such a structure contributes to facility. It renders the acquisition of our language less laborious, the arrangement of our words more plain and obvious, the rules of our syntax fewer and more simple.

I agree, indeed, with Dr. Lowth (preface to his Grammar), in thinking that the simplicity and facility of our language occasions its being frequently written and spoken with less accuracy. It was necessary to study languages which were of a more complex and artificial form, with greater care. The marks of gender and case, the varieties of conjugation and declension, the multiplied rules of syntax, were all to be attended to in speech. Hence language became more an object of art. It was reduced into form; a standard was established; and any departures from the standard became conspicuous. Whereas, among us, language is hardly considered as an object of grammatical rule. We take it for granted, that a competent skill in it may be acquired without any study; and that, in a syntax so narrow and confined as ours, there is nothing which demands attention. Hence arises the habit of writing in a loose and inaccurate manner.

I admit, that no grammatical rules have sufficient authority to control the firm and established usage of language. Established custom, in speaking and writing, is the standard to which we must at last resort, for determining every controverted point in language and style. But it will not follow from this, that grammatical rules are superseded as useless. In every language which has been in any degree cultivated, there prevails a certain structure and analogy of parts, which is understood to give foundation to the most reputable usages of speech; and which, in all cases, when usage is loose or dubious, possesses considerable authority. In every language, there are rules of syntax which must be inviolably observed by all who would either write or speak with any propriety. For syntax is no other than that arrangement of words in a sentence, which renders the meaning of each word, and the relation of all the words to one another, most clear and intelligible.

All the rules of Latin syntax, it is true, cannot be applied to our language. Many of these rules arose from the particular form of their language, which occasioned verbs or prepositions to govern, some the genitive, some the dative, some the accusative or ablative case. But, abstracting from these peculiarities, it is to be always remembered, that the chief and fundamental rules of syntax are common to the English as well as the Latin tongue; and, indeed, belong equally to all languages. For, in all languages, the parts which compose speech are essentially the same; substantives, adjectives, verbs, and connecting particles: and wherever these parts of speech are found, there are certain necessary relations among them, which regulate their syntax, or the place which they ought to possess in a sentence. Thus, in English, just as much as in Latin, the adjective must, by position, be made to agree with its substantive; and the verb must agree with its nominative in person and number; because, from the nature of things, a word, which expresses either a quality or an action, must correspond as closely as possible with the name of that thing whose quality, or whose action, it expresses. Two or more substantives, joined by a copulative, must always require the verbs, or pronouns, to which they refer, to be placed in the plural number; otherwise, their common relation to these verbs or pronouns is not pointed out. An active verb must, in every language, govern the accusative; that is, clearly point out some substantive noun, as the object to which its action is directed. A relative pronoun must, in every form of speech, agree with its antecedent in gender, number, and person; and conjunctions, or connecting particles, ought always to couple like cases and moods; that is, ought to join together words which are of the same form and state with each other. I mention these, as a few exemplifications of that fundamental regard to syntax, which, even in such a language as ours, is absolutely requisite for writing or speaking with any propriety.

Whatever the advantages or defects of the English language be, as it is our own language, it deserves a high degree of our study and attention, both with regard to the choice of words which we employ, and with regard to the syntax, or the arrangement of these words in a sentence. We know how much the Greeks and the Romans, in their most polished and flourishing times, cultivated their own tongues. We know how much study both the French, and the Italians, have bestowed upon theirs. Whatever knowledge may be acquired by the study of other languages, it can never be communicated with advantage, unless by such as can write and speak their own language well. Let the matter of an author be ever so good and useful, his compositions will always suffer in the public esteem, if his expression be deficient in purity and propriety. At the same time, the attainment of a correct

and elegant style, is an object which demands application and labour. If any imagine they can catch it merely by the ear, or acquire it by a slight perusal of some of our good authors, they will find themselves much disappointed. The many errors, even in point of grammar, the many offences against purity of language, which are committed by writers who are far from being contemptible, demonstrate, that a careful study of the language is previously requisite, in all who aim at writing it properly.*

LECTURE X.

STYLE.—PERSPICUITY AND PRECISION.

HAVING finished the subject of language, I now enter on the consideration of Style, and the rules that relate to it.

It is not easy to give a precise idea of what is meant by Style. The best definition I can give of it is, the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions, by means of language. It is different from mere language or words. The words which an author employs, may be proper and faultless; and his style may, nevertheless, have great faults: it may be dry, or stiff, or feeble, or affected. Style has always some reference to an author's manner of thinking. It is a picture of the ideas which rise in his mind, and of the manner in which they rise there; and, hence, when we are examining an author's composition, it is, in many cases, extremely difficult to separate the style from the sentiment. No wonder these two should be so intimately connected, as style is nothing else than that sort of expression which our thoughts most readily assume. Hence different countries have been noted for peculiarities of style, suited to their different temper and genius. The eastern nations animated their style with the most strong and hyperbolical figures. The Athenians, a polished and acute people, formed a style accurate, clear, and neat. The Asiatics, gay and loose in their manners, affected a style florid and diffuse. The like sort of characteristical differences are commonly remarked in the style of the French, the English, and the Spaniards. In giving the general characters of style, it is usual to talk of a nervous, a feeble, or a spirited style; which are plainly the characters of a

* On this subject the reader ought to peruse Dr. Lowth's Short Introduction to English Grammar, with critical notes; which is the grammatical performance of highest authority that has appeared in our time, and in which he will see, what I have said concerning the innacuracies in language of some of our best writers, fully verified. In Dr. Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, he will likewise find many acute and ingenious observations, both on the English language, and on style in general. And Dr. Priestley's Rudiments of English Grammar will also be useful, by pointing out several of the errors into which writers are apt to fall.

writer's manner of thinking, as well as of expressing himself; so difficult it is to separate these two things from one another. Of the general characters of style, I am afterward to discourse; but it will be necessary to begin with examining the more simple qualities of it; from the assemblage of which, its more complex denominations, in a great measure, result.

All the qualities of a good style may be ranged under two heads, Perspicuity and Ornament. For all that can possibly be required of language, is, to convey our ideas clearly to the minds of others, and, at the same time, in such a dress, as, by pleasing and interesting them, shall most effectually strengthen the impressions which we seek to make. When both these ends are answered, we certainly accomplish every purpose for which we use writing and discourse.

Perspicuity, it will be readily admitted, is the fundamental quality of style;* a quality so essential in every kind of writing, that for the want of it, nothing can atone. Without this, the richest ornaments of style only glimmer through the dark, and puzzle, instead of pleasing, the reader. This, therefore, must be our first object, to make our meaning clearly and fully understood, and understood without the least difficulty. 'Oratio,' says Quinctilian, 'debet negligenter quoque audientibus esse aperta; ut in animum audientis, sicut sol in oculos, etiamsi in eum non intendatur, occurrat. Quare, non solum ut intelligere possit, sed ne omino possit non intelligere curandum.'† If we are obliged to follow a writer with much care, to pause, and to read over his sentences a second time, in order to comprehend them fully, he will never please us long. Mankind are too indolent to relish so much labour. They may pretend to admire the author's depth, after they have discovered his meaning; but they will seldom be inclined to take up his work a second time.

Authors sometimes plead the difficulty of their subject, as an excuse for the want of perspicuity. But the excuse can rarely, if ever, be admitted. For whatever a man conceives clearly, that it is in his power, if he will be at the trouble, to put into distinct propositions, or to express clearly to others: and upon no subject ought any man to write, where he cannot think clearly. His ideas, indeed, may, very excusably, be on some subjects incomplete or inadequate; but still, as far as they go, they ought to be clear; and wherever this is the case, perspicuity, in expressing them, is

* 'Nobis prima sit virtus, perspicuitas, propria verba, rectus ordo, non in longum dilata conclusio; nihil neque desit, neque superfluat.'—QUINCTIL. lib. viii.

† 'Discourse ought always to be obvious, even to the most careless and negligent hearer, so that the sense shall strike his mind, as the light of the sun does our eyes, though they are not directed upwards to it. We must study, not only that every hearer may understand us, but that it shall be impossible for him not to understand us.

always attainable. The obscurity which reigns so much among many metaphysical writers, is, for the most part, owing to the indistinctness of their own conceptions. They see the object but in a confused light; and, of course, can never exhibit it in a clear one to others.

Perspicuity in writing, is not to be considered as merely a sort of negative virtue, or freedom from defect. It has higher merit. It is a degree of positive beauty. We are pleased with an author, we consider him as deserving praise, who frees us from all fatigue of searching for his meaning; who carries us through his subject without any embarrassment or confusion; whose style flows always like a limpid stream, where we see to the very bottom.

The study of perspicuity requires attention, first, to single words and phrases, and then to the construction of sentences. I begin with treating of the first, and shall confine myself to it in this Lecture.

Perspicuity, considered with respect to words and phrases, requires these three qualities in them; *Purity*, *Propriety*, and *Precision.*

Purity and Propriety of language are often used indiscriminately for each other; and, indeed, they are very nearly allied. A distinction, however, obtains between them. Purity, is the use of such words, and such constructions, as belong to the idiom of the language which we speak; in opposition to words and phrases that are imported from other languages, or that are obsolete, or new-coined, or used without proper authority. Propriety, is the selection of such words in the language, as the best and most established usage has appropriated to those ideas which we intend to express by them. It implies the correct and happy application of them, according to that usage, in opposition to vulgarisms, or low expressions; and to words and phrases, which would be less significant of the ideas that we mean to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may all be strictly English, without Scotticisms or Gallicisms, or ungrammatical irregular expressions of any kind, and may, nevertheless, be deficient in propriety. The words may be ill chosen; not adapted to the subject, not fully expressive of the author's sense. He has taken all his words and phrases from the general mass of English language; but he has made his selection among these words unhappily. Whereas, style cannot be proper without being also pure: and where both purity and propriety meet, besides making style perspicuous, they also render it graceful. There is no standard, either of purity or of propriety, but the practice of the best writers and speakers in the country.

When I mentioned obsolete or new-coined words as incongruous with purity of style, it will be easily understood, that some exceptions are to be made. On certain occasions, they may have grace

Poetry admits of greater latitude than prose, with respect to coining, or, at least, new-compounding words; yet, even here, this liberty should be used with a sparing hand. In prose, such innovations are more hazardous, and have a worse effect. They are apt to give style an affected and conceited air; and should never be ventured upon, except by such, whose established reputation gives them some degree of dictatorial power over language.

The introduction of foreign and learned words, unless where necessity requires them, should always be avoided. Barren languages may need such assistances; but ours is not one of these. Dean Swift, one of our most correct writers, valued himself much on using no words but such as were of native growth: and his language may, indeed, be considered as a standard of the strictest purity and propriety, in the choice of words. At present, we seem to be departing from this standard. A multitude of Latin words have, of late, been poured in upon us. On some occasions, they give an appearance of elevation and dignity to style. But often, also, they render it stiff and forced. And, in general, a plain native style, as it is more intelligible to all readers, so, by a proper management of words, it may be made equally strong and expressive with this Latinized English.

Let us now consider the import of Precision in language, which, as it is the highest part of the quality denoted by perspicuity, merits a full explication; and the more, because distinct ideas are, perhaps, not commonly formed about it.

The exact import of precision may be drawn from the etymology of the word. It comes from 'præcidere,' to cut off. It imports retrenching all superfluities, and pruning the expression so, as to exhibit neither more nor less than an exact copy of his idea who uses it. I observed before, that it is often difficult to separate the qualities of style from the qualities of thought; and it is found so in this instance, for, in order to write with precision, though this be properly a quality of style, one must possess a very considerable degree of distinctness and accuracy in his manner of thinking.

The words, which a man uses to express his ideas, may be faulty in three respects. They may either not express that idea which the author intends, but some other which only resembles, or is akin to it; or, they may express that idea, but not quite fully and completely; or, they may express it, together with something more than he intends. Precision stands opposed to all these three faults; but chiefly to the last. In an author's writing with propriety, his being free from the two former faults seems implied. The words which he uses are proper; that is, they express that idea which he intends, and they express it fully; but to be precise signifies, that they express that idea, and no more. There is nothing in his words which introduces any foreign idea, any super-

fluous unseasonable accessory, so as to mix it confusedly with the principal object, and thereby to render our conception of that object loose and indistinct. This requires a writer to have, himself, a very clear apprehension of the object he means to represent to us; to have laid fast hold of it in his mind; and never to waver in any one view he takes of it: a perfection to which, indeed, few writers attain.

The use and importance of precision, may be deduced from the nature of the human mind. It never can view, clearly and distinctly, above one object at a time. If it must look at two or three together, especially objects among which there is resemblance or connexion, it finds itself confused and embarrassed. It cannot clearly perceive in what they agree, and in what they differ. Thus, were any object, suppose some animal, to be presented to me, of whose structure I wanted to form a distinct notion, I would desire all its trappings to be taken off, I would require it to be brought before me by itself, and to stand alone, that there might be nothing to distract my attention. The same is the case with words. If, when you would inform me of your meaning, you also tell me more than what conveys it; if you join foreign circumstances to the principal object; if, by unnecessarily varying the expression, you shift the point of view, and make me see sometimes the object itself, and sometimes another thing that is connected with it; you thereby oblige me to look on several objects at once, and I lose sight of the principal. You load the animal you are shewing me, with so many trappings and collars, and bring so many of the same species before me, somewhat resembling, and yet somewhat differing, that I see none of them clearly.

This forms what is called a loose style; and is the proper opposite to precision. It generally arises from using a superfluity of words. Feeble writers employ a multitude of words to make themselves understood, as they think, more distinctly; and they only confound the reader. They are sensible of not having caught the precise expression, to convey what they would signify; they do not, indeed, conceive their own meaning very precisely themselves; and, therefore, help it out, as they can, by this and the other word, which may, as they suppose, supply the defect, and bring you somewhat nearer to their idea. They are always going about it and about it, but never just hit the thing. The image, as they set it before you, is always seen double; and no double image is distinct. When an author tells me of his hero's *courage* in the day of battle, the expression is precise, and I understand it fully. But if, from the desire of multiplying words, he will needs praise his *courage* and *fortitude;* at the moment he joins these words together, my idea begins to waver. He means to express one quality more strongly; but he is, in truth, expressing two. *Con-*

rage resists danger; *fortitude* supports pain. The occasion of exerting each of these qualities is different; and being led to think of both together, when only one of them should be in my view, my view is rendered unsteady, and my conception of the objects indistinct.

From what I have said it appears that an author may, in a qualified sense, be perspicuous, while yet he is far from being precise. He uses proper words, and proper arrangement; he gives you the idea as clear as he conceives it himself; and so far he is perspicuous; but the ideas are not very clear in his own mind; they are loose and general; and, therefore, cannot be expressed with precision. All subjects do not equally require precision. It is sufficient, on many occasions, that we have a general view of the meaning. The subject, perhaps, is of the known and familiar kind; and we are in no hazard of mistaking the sense of the author, though every word which he uses be not precise and exact.

Few authors, for instance, in the English language, are more clear and perspicuous, on the whole, than Archbishop Tillotson, and Sir William Temple; yet neither of them are remarkable for precision. They are loose and diffuse; and accustomed to express their meaning by several words, which shew you fully whereabouts it lies, rather than to single out those expressions which would convey clearly the idea they have in view, and no more. Neither, indeed, is precision the prevailing character of Mr. Addison's style; although he is not so deficient in this respect as the other two authors.

Lord Shaftesbury's faults, in point of precision, are muco greater than Mr. Addison's; and the more unpardonable, because he is a professed philosophical writer; who, as such, ought, above all things, to have studied precision. His style has both great beauties, and great faults; and, on the whole, is by no means a safe model for imitation. Lord Shaftesbury was well acquainted with the power of words; those which he employs are generally proper and well-sounding; he has great variety of them; and his arrangement, as shall be afterward shewn, is commonly beautiful. His defect, in precision, is not owing so much to indistinct or confused ideas, as to perpetual affectation. He is fond, to excess, of the pomp and parade of language; he is never satisfied with expressing any thing clearly and simply; he must always give it the dress of state and majesty. Hence perpetual circumlocutions, and many words and phrases employed to describe somewhat, that would have been described much better by one of them. If he has occasion to mention any person or author, he very rarely mentions him by his proper name. In the treatise, entitled, Advice to an Author, he descants for two or three pages together upon Aristotle, without once naming him in any other way, than the Master

Critic, the Mighty Genius and Judge of Art, the Prince of Critics, the Grand Master of Art, and Consummate Philologist. In the same way, the Grand Poetic Sire, the Philosophical Patriarch, and his Disciple of noble Birth and lofty Genius, are the only names by which he condescends to distinguish Homer, Socrates, and Plato, in another passage of the same treatise. This method of distinguishing persons is extremely affected; but it is not so contrary to precision, as the frequent circumlocutions he employs for all moral ideas; attentive, on every occasion, more to the pomp of language, than to the clearness which he ought to have studied as a philosopher. The moral sense, for instance, after he had once defined it, was a clear term; but how vague becomes the idea, when, in the next page, he calls it, 'That natural affection, and anticipating fancy, which makes the sense of right and wrong?' Self-examination, or reflection on our own conduct, is an idea conceived with ease; but when it is wrought into all the forms of 'A man's dividing himself into two parties, becoming a self-dialogist, entering into partnership with himself, forming the dual number practically within himself;' we hardly know what to make of it. On some occasions, he so adorns, or rather loads with words, the plainest and simplest propositions, as, if not to obscure, at least to enfeeble them.

In the following paragraph, for example, of the Inquiry concerning Virtue, he means to shew, that, by every ill action we hurt our mind, as much as one who should swallow poison, or give himself a wound, would hurt his body. Observe what a redundancy of words he pours forth: 'Now, if the fabric of the mind or temper appeared to us such as it really is; if we saw it impossible to remove hence any one good or orderly affection, or to introduce any ill or disorderly one, without drawing on, in some degree, that dissolute state which, at its height, is confessed to be so miserable; it would then, undoubtedly, be confessed, that since no ill, immoral, or unjust action can be committed, without either a new inroad and breach on the temper and passions, or a farther advancing of that execution already done: whoever did ill, or acted in prejudice to his integrity, good-nature, or worth, would, of necessity, act with greater cruelty towards himself, than he who scrupled not to swallow what was poisonous, or who, with his own hands, should voluntarily mangle or wound his outward form or constitution, natural limbs or body.'* Here, to commit a bad action, is, first, 'To remove a good and orderly affection, and to introduce an ill or disorderly one;' next, it is, 'To commit an action that is ill, immoral, and unjust;' and in the next line, it is, 'To do ill, or to act in prejudice of integrity, good-nature, and worth;' nay, so very simple a thing as a man's wounding himself, is, 'To mangle,

* Characterist. vol. ii. p. 85.

or wound, his outward form or constitution, his natural limbs or body.' Such superfluity of words is disgustful to every reader of correct taste; and serves no purpose but to embarrass and perplex the sense. This sort of style is elegantly described by Quinctilian. 'Est in quibusdam turba inanium verborum, qui dum communem loquendi morem reformidant, ducti specie nitoris, circumeunt omnia copiosâ loquacitate quæ dicere volunt.'* Lib. vii. cap. 2.

The great source of a loose style, in opposition to precision, is the injudicious use of those words termed Synonymous. They are called synonymous, because they agree in expressing one principal idea; but, for the most part, if not always, they express it with some diversity in the circumstances. They are varied by some accessory idea which every word introduces, and which forms the distinction between them. Hardly, in any language, are there two words that convey precisely the same idea; a person thoroughly conversant in the propriety of the language, will always be able to observe something that distinguishes them. As they are like different shades of the same colour, an accurate writer can employ them to great advantage, by using them so as to heighten and to finish the picture which he gives us. He supplies by one, what was wanting in the other, to the force, or to the lustre of the image which he means to exhibit. But in order to this end, he must be extremely attentive to the choice which he makes of them. For the bulk of writers are very apt to confound them with each other; and to employ them carelessly, merely for the sake of filling up a period, or of rounding and diversifying the language, as if their signification were exactly the same, while, in truth, it is not. Hence a certain mist, and indistinctness, is unwarily thrown over style.

In the Latin language there are no two words we should more readily take to be synonymous than *amare* and *diligere*. Cicero, however, has shewn us, that there is a very clear distinction betwixt them. 'Quid ergo,' says he, in one of his epistles, 'tibi commendem eum quem tu ipse diligis? Sed tamen ut scires eum non a me *diligi* solum, verum etiam *amari*, ob eam rem tibi hæc scribo.'† In the same manner, *tutus* and *securus*, are words which we should readily confound; yet their meaning is different. *Tutus* signifies out of danger; *securus*, free from the dread of it. Seneca has elegantly marked this distinction; 'Tuta scelera esse possunt, secura non possunt.'‡ In our own language, very many instances might be given of a difference in meaning among words reputed synonymous; and, as the subject is of importance, I shall now

* 'A crowd of unmeaning words is brought together, by some authors, who, afraid of expressing themselves after a common and ordinary manner, and allured by an appearance of splendour, surround every thing which they mean to say with a certain copious loquacity.'

† Ad Famil. l. xiii. Ep. 47. ‡ Epis. 97.

point out some of these. The instances which I am to give, may themselves be of use; and they will serve to shew the necessity of attending, with care and strictness, to the exact import of words, if ever we would write with propriety or precision.

Austerity, severity, rigour. Austerity relates to the manner of living; severity, of thinking; rigour, of punishing. To austerity is opposed effeminacy; to severity, relaxation; to rigour, clemency. A hermit is austere in his life; a casuist, severe in his application of religion or law; a judge, rigorous in his sentences.

Custom, habit. Custom respects the action; habit, the actor. By custom, we mean the frequent repetition of the same act; by habit, the effect which that repetition produces on the mind or body. By the custom of walking often in the streets, one acquires a habit of idleness.

Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded. I am surprised with what is new or unexpected; I am astonished at what is vast or great; I am amazed with what is incomprehensible; I am confounded by what is shocking or terrible.

Desist, renounce, quit, leave off. Each of these words implies some pursuit or object relinquished; but from different motives. We desist from the difficulty of accomplishing. We renounce, on account of the disagreeableness of the object or pursuit. We quit, for the sake of some other thing which interests us more; and we leave off, because we are weary of the design. A politician desists from his designs, when he finds they are impracticable; he renounces the court, because he has been affronted by it; he quits ambition for study or retirement; and leaves off his attendance on the great, as he becomes old and weary of it.

Pride, vanity. Pride makes us esteem ourselves; vanity makes us desire the esteem of others. It is just to say, as Dean Swift has done, that a man is too proud to be vain.

Haughtiness, disdain. Haughtiness is founded on the high opinion we entertain of ourselves; disdain, on the low opinion we have of others.

To distinguish, to separate. We distinguish what we want not to confound with another thing; we separate what we want to remove from it. Objects are distinguished from one another by their qualities. They are separated by the distance of time or place.

To weary, to fatigue. The continuance of the same thing wearies us; labour fatigues us. I am weary with standing; I am fatigued with walking. A suitor wearies us by his perseverance; fatigues us by his importunity.

To abhor, to detest. To abhor, imports, simply, strong dislike; to detest, imports also strong disapprobation. One abhors being in debt; he detests treachery.

To invent, to discover. We invent things that are new; we discover what was before hidden. Galileo invented the telescope. Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood.

Only, alone. Only, imports, that there is no other of the same kind; alone, imports being accompanied by no other. An only child is one who has neither brother nor sister; a child alone, is one who is left by itself. There is a difference, therefore, in precise language, betwixt these two phrases. 'Virtue only makes us happy;' and, 'Virtue alone makes us happy.' Virtue only makes us happy, imports, that nothing else can do it. Virtue alone makes us happy, imports, that virtue, by itself, or unaccompanied with other advantages, is sufficient to do it.

Entire, complete. A thing is entire, by wanting none of its parts; complete, by wanting none of the appendages that belong to it. A man may have an entire house to himself, and yet not have one complete apartment.

Tranquillity, peace, calm. Tranquillity respects a situation free from trouble, considered in itself; peace, the same situation with respect to any causes that might interrupt it; calm, with regard to a disturbed situation going before, or following it. A good man enjoys tranquillity in himself; peace, with others; and calm after the storm.

A difficulty, an obstacle. A difficulty embarrasses; an obstacle stops us. We remove the one, we surmount the other Generally, the first, expresses somewhat arising from the nature and circumstances of the affair; the second somewhat arising from a foreign cause. Philip found difficulty in managing the Athenians from the nature of their dispositions; but the eloquence of Demosthenes was the greatest obstacle to his designs.

Wisdom, prudence. Wisdom leads us to speak and act what is most proper. Prudence prevents our speaking or acting improperly. A wise man employs the most proper means for success; a prudent man, the safest means for not being brought into danger.

Enough, sufficient. Enough relates to the quantity which one wishes to have of any thing; sufficient relates to the use that is to be made of it. Hence, enough, generally imports a greater quantity than sufficient does. The covetous man never has enough, although he has what is sufficient for nature.

To avow, to acknowledge, to confess. Each of these words imports the affirmation of a fact, but in very different circumstances. To avow, supposes the person to glory in it; to acknowledge, supposes a small degree of faultiness, which the acknowledgment compensates; to confess, supposes a higher degree of crime. A patriot avows his opposition to a bad minister, and is applauded; a gentleman acknowledges his mistake, and is forgiven; a prisoner confesses the crime he is accused of, and is punished.

To remark, to observe. We remark, in the way of attention, in order to remember; we observe, in the way of examination, in order to judge. A traveller remarks the most striking objects he sees; a general observes all the motions of his enemy.

Equivocal, ambiguous. An equivocal expression is one which has one sense open, and designed to be understood; another sense concealed, and understood only by the person who uses it. An ambiguous expression is one which has apparently two senses, and leaves us at a loss which of them to give it. An equivocal expression is used with an intention to deceive; an ambiguous one, when it is used with design, is, with an intention not to give full information. An honest man will never employ an equivocal expression; a confused man may often utter ambiguous ones, without any design. I shall give only one instance more.

With, by. Both these particles express the connexion between some instrument, or means of effecting an end, and the agent who employs it; but *with* expresses a more close and immediate connexion; *by*, a more remote one. We kill a man *with* a sword; he dies *by* violence. The criminal is bound *with* ropes *by* the executioner. The proper distinction in the use of these particles, is elegantly marked in a passage of Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland. When one of the old Scottish kings was making an inquiry into the tenure *by* which his nobles held their lands, they started up, and drew their swords: '*By* these,' said they, 'we acquired our lands, and *with* these we will defend them.' '*By* these we acquired our lands,' signifies the more remote means of acquisition by force and martial deed; and, '*with* these we will defend them,' signifies the immediate direct instrument, the sword, which they would employ in their defence.

These are instances of words in our language, which, by careless writers, are apt to be employed as perfectly synonymous, and yet are not so. Their significations approach, but are not precisely the same. The more the distinction in the meaning of such words is weighed, and attended to, the more clearly and forcibly shall we speak or write.*

From all that has been said on this head, it will now appear, that, in order to write or speak with precision, two things are

* In French, there is a very useful treatise on the subject, the Abbé Girard's *Synonymes Françoises*, in which he has made a large collection of such apparent synonymes in the language, and shewn, with much accuracy, the difference in their signification. It is to be wished that some such work were undertaken for our tongue, and executed with equal taste and judgment. Nothing would contribute more to precise and elegant writing. In the mean time, this French treatise may be perused with considerable profit. It will accustom persons to weigh, with attention, the force of words; and will suggest several distinctions betwixt synonymous terms in our own language, analogous to those which he has pointed out in the French; and accordingly, several of the instances above given were suggested by the work of this author.

especially requisite; one, that an author's own ideas be clear and distinct; and the other, that we have an exact and full comprehension of the force of those words which he employs. Natural genius is here required; labour and attention still more. Dean Swift is one of the authors in our language, most distinguished for precision of style. In his writings we seldom or never find vague expressions, and synonymous words, carelessly thrown together. His meaning is always clear, and strongly marked.

I had occasion to observe before, that, though all subjects of writing or discourse demand perspicuity, yet all do not require the same degree of that exact precision, which I have endeavoured to explain. It is, indeed, in every sort of writing a great beauty to have, at least, some measure of precision, in distinction from that loose profusion of words which imprints no clear idea on the reader's mind. But we must, at the same time, be on our guard, lest too great a study of precision, especially in subjects where it is not strictly requisite, betray us into a dry and barren style; lest, from the desire of pruning too closely, we retrench all copiousness and ornament. Some degree of this failing may, perhaps, be remarked in Dean Swift's serious works. Attentive only to exhibit his ideas clear and exact, resting wholly on his sense and distinctness, he appears to reject, disdainfully, all embellishment; which on some occasions may be thought to render his manner somewhat hard and dry. To unite copiousness and precision, to be flowing and graceful, and at the same time, correct and exact in the choice of every word, is, no doubt, one of the highest and most difficult attainments in writing. Some kinds of composition may require more of copiousness and ornament; others, more of precision and accuracy; nay, in the same composition the different parts of it may demand a proper variation of manner. But we must study never to sacrifice, totally, any one of these qualities to the other; and by a proper management, both of them may be made fully consistent, if our own ideas be precise, and our knowledge and stock of words be, at the same time, extensive.

LECTURE XI.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

Having begun to treat of style, in the last Lecture, I considered its fundamental quality, perspicuity. What I have said of this relates chiefly to the choice of words. From words I proceed to Sentences; and as, in all writing and discourse, the proper com-

position and structure of sentences is of the highest importance, I shall treat of this fully. Though perspicuity be the general head under which I, at present, consider language, I shall not confine myself to this quality alone, in sentences, but shall inquire also, what is requisite for their grace and beauty: that I may bring together, under one view, all that seems necessary to be attended to, in the construction and arrangement of words in a sentence.

It is not easy to give an exact definition of a sentence, or period, farther, than as it always implies some one complete proposition or enunciation of thought. Aristotle's definition is, in the main, a good one: 'Λεξις εχουσα αρχην και τελευτην καθ' αυτην, και μεγεθος ευσυνοπτον:' A form of speech which hath a beginning and an end within itself, and is of such a length as to be easily comprehended once.' This, however, admits of great latitude. For a sentence, or period, consists always of component parts which are called its members; and as these members may be either few or many, and may be connected in several different ways, the same thought, or mental proposition, may often be either brought into one sentence, or split into two or three, without the material breach of any rule.

The first variety that occurs in the consideration of sentences, is, the distinction of long and short ones. The precise length of sentences, as to the number of words, or the number of members, which may enter into them, cannot be ascertained by any definite measure. At the same time, it is obvious, there may be an extreme on either side. Sentences, immoderately long, and consisting of too many members, always transgress some one or other of the rules which I shall mention soon, as necessary to be observed in every good sentence. In discourses that are to be spoken, regard must be had to the easiness of pronunciation, which is not consistent with too long periods. In compositions where pronunciation has no place, still, however, by using long periods too frequently, an author overloads the reader's ear, and fatigues his attention. For long periods require, evidently, more attention than short ones, in order to perceive clearly the connexion of the several parts, and to take in the whole at one view. At the same time there may be an excess, in too many short sentences, also; by which the sense is split and broken, the connexion of thought weakened, and the memory burdened, by presenting to it a long succession of minute objects.

With regard to the length and construction of sentences, the French critics make a very just distinction of style, into 'style periodique,' and 'style coupé.' The 'style periodique' is, where the sentences are composed of several members linked together and hanging upon one another, so that the sense of the whole is

not brought out till the close. This is the most pompous, musical, and oratorical manner of composing; as in the following sentences of Sir William Temple: 'If you look about you, and consider the lives of others, as well as your own; if you think how few are born with honour, and how many die without name or children; how little beauty we see, and how few friends we hear of; how many diseases, and how much poverty there is in the world; you will fall down upon your knees, and, instead of repining at one affliction, will admire so many blessings which you have received from the hand of God.' (Letter to Lady Essex.) Cicero abounds with sentences constructed after this manner.

The 'style coupé' is, where the sense is formed into short independent propositions, each complete within itself; as in the following of Mr. Pope: 'I confess, it was want of consideration that made me an author. I writ, because it amused me. I corrected, because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write. I published, because I was told I might please such as it was a credit to please.' (Preface to his Works.) This is very much the French method of writing; and always suits gay and easy subjects. The 'style periodique' gives an air of gravity and dignity to composition. The 'style coupé,' is more lively and striking. According to the nature of the composition, therefore, and the general character it ought to bear, the one or other may be predominant. But, in almost every kind of composition, the great rule is to intermix them. For the ear tires of either of them when too long continued: whereas, by a proper mixture of long and short periods, the ear is gratified, and a certain sprightliness is joined with majesty in our style. 'Non semper,' says Cicero, describing, very expressively, these two different kinds of styles, of which I have been speaking, 'non semper utendum est perpetuitate, et quasi conversione verborum; sed sæpe carpenda membris minutioribus oratio est.'*

This variety is of so great consequence, that it must be studied, not only in the succession of long and short sentences, but in the structure of our sentences also. A train of sentences, constructed in the same manner, and with the same number of members, whether long or short, should never be allowed to succeed one another. However musical each of them may be, it has a better effect to introduce even a discord, than to cloy the ear with a repetition of similar sounds: for, nothing is so tiresome as perpetual uniformity. In this article of the construction and distribution of his sentences, Lord Shaftesbury has shewn great art. In the last Lecture, I observed, that he is often guilty of sacrificing precision of style to pomp of expression; and that there runs through his whole

* 'It is not proper always to employ a continued train, and a sort of regular compass of phrases; but style ought to be often broken down into smaller members.'

manner a stiffness and affectation, which render him very unfit to be considered as a general model. But, as his ear was fine, and as he was extremely attentive to every thing that is elegant, he has studied the proper intermixture of long and short sentences, with variety and harmony in their structure, more than any other English author: and for this part of composition he deserves attention.

From these general observations, let us now descend to a more particular consideration of the qualities that are required to make a sentence perfect. So much depends upon the proper construction of sentences, that, in every sort of composition, we cannot be too strict in our attentions to it. For, be the subject what it will, if the sentences be constructed in a clumsy, perplexed, or feeble manner, it is impossible that a work, composed of such sentences, can be read with pleasure, or even with profit. Whereas, by giving attention to the rules which relate to this part of style, we acquire the habit of expressing ourselves with perspicuity and elegance; and if a disorder chance to arise in some of our sentences, we immediately see where it lies, and are able to rectify it.*

The properties most essential to a perfect sentence, seem to me the four following: 1. Clearness and Precision. 2. Unity. 3. Strength. 4. Harmony. Each of these I shall illustrate separately, and at some length.

The first is, Clearness and Precision. The least failure here, the least degree of ambiguity, which leaves the mind in any sort of suspense as to the meaning, ought to be avoided with the greatest care; nor is it so easy a matter to keep always clear of this, as one might, at first, imagine. Ambiguity arises from two causes: either from a wrong choice of words, or a wrong collocation of them. Of the choice of words, as far as regards perspicuity, I treated fully in the last Lecture. Of the collocation of them, I am now to treat. The first thing to be studied here, is, to observe exactly the rules of grammar, as far as these can guide us. But as the grammar of our language is not extensive, there may often be an ambiguous collocation of words, where there is no transgression of any grammatical rule. The relations which the words, or members of a period, bear to one another, cannot be pointed out in English, as in the

* On the structure of sentences, the ancients appear to have bestowed a great deal of attention and care. The treatise of Demetrius Phalereus, περι Ερμηνειας, abounds with observations upon the choice and collocation of words, carried to such a degree of nicety, as would frequently seem to us minute. The treatise of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, περι συνθεσιως ονοματος, is more masterly; but is chiefly confined to the musical structure of periods; a subject for which the Greek language afforded much more assistance to their writers than our tongue admits. On the arrangement of words, in English sentences, the eighteenth chapter of Lord Kaimes's Elements of Criticism ought to be consulted; and also, the second volume of Dr. Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric.

Greek or Latin, by means of termination; it is ascertained only by the position in which they stand. Hence a capital rule in the arrangement of sentences is, that the words or members most nearly related, should be placed in the sentence, as near to each other as possible; so as to make their mutual relation clearly appear. This is a rule not always observed, even by good writers, as strictly as it ought to be. It will be necessary to produce some instances, which will both shew the importance of this rule, and make the application of it understood.

First, In the position of adverbs, which are used to qualify the signification of something which either precedes or follows them, there is often a good deal of nicety. 'By greatness,' says Mr. Addison, in the Spectator, No. 412, 'I do not only mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of a whole view.' Here the place of the adverb *only*, renders it a limitation of the following word, mean. 'I do not only mean.' The question may then be put, What does he more than mean? Had he placed it after *bulk*, still it would have been wrong. 'I do not mean the *bulk only* of any single object.' For we might then ask, What does he mean more than the bulk? Is it the colour? or any other property? Its proper place, undoubtedly, is, after the word *object*. 'By greatness, I do not mean the bulk of any single object only;' for then, when we put the question, What more does he mean than the bulk of a single object? the answer comes out exactly as the author intends, and gives it 'the largeness of a whole view.'—'Theism,' says Lord Shaftesbury, 'can only be opposed to polytheism, or atheism.' Does he mean that theism is capable of nothing else, except being opposed to polytheism or atheism? This is what his words literally import, through the wrong collocation of *only*. He should have said, 'Theism can be opposed only to polytheism or atheism.'—In like manner, Dean Swift (Project for the Advancement of Religion), 'The Romans understood liberty, at least, as well as we.' These words are capable of two different senses, according as the emphasis, in reading them, is laid upon *liberty*, or upon *at least*. In the first case, they will signify, that whatever other things we may understand better than the Romans, *liberty*, at least, was one thing which they understood as well as we. In the second case, they will import, that liberty was understood, *at least* as well by them as by us; meaning, that by them it was better understood. If this last, as I make no doubt, was Dean Swift's own meaning, the ambiguity would have been avoided, and the sense rendered independent of the manner of pronouncing, by arranging the words thus: 'the Romans understood liberty, as well, at least, as we.' The fact is, with respect to such adverbs, as, *only*, *wholly*, *at least*, and the rest of that tribe, that in common discourse, the tone and emphasis we use in pronouncing them,

generally serves to shew their reference, and to make the meaning clear; and hence, we acquire a habit of throwing them in loosely in the course of a period. But, in writing, where a man speaks to the eye and not to the ear, he ought to be more accurate; and so to connect those adverbs with the words which they qualify, as to put his meaning out of doubt upon the first inspection.

Secondly, When a circumstance is interposed in the middle of a sentence, it sometimes requires attention how to place it, so as to divest it of all ambiguity. For instance: 'Are these designs,' (says Lord Bolingbroke, Dissert.on Parties, Dedicat.) 'Are these designs, which any man, who is born a Briton, in any circumstances, in any situation, ought to be ashamed or afraid to avow?' Here we are left at a loss, whether these words, '*in any circumstances, in any situation,*' are connected with 'a man born in Britain, in any circumstances, or situation,' or with that man's avowing his designs, in any circumstances or situation into which he may be brought? If the latter, as seems most probable, was intended to be the meaning, the arrangement ought to have been conducted thus: 'Are these designs, which any man who is born a Briton ought to be ashamed or afraid, in any circumstances, in any situation, to avow?' But,

Thirdly, Still more attention is required to the proper disposition of the relative pronouns, *who, which, what, whose,* and of all those particles which express the connexion of the parts of speech with one another. As all reasoning depends upon this connexion, we cannot be too accurate and precise here. A small error may overcloud the meaning of the whole sentence; and even where the meaning is intelligible, yet where these relative particles are out of their proper place, we always find something awkward and disjointed in the structure of the sentence. Thus in the Spectator, No. 54. 'This kind of wit,' says Mr. Addison, 'was very much in vogue among our countrymen, about an age or two ago, who did not practise it for any oblique reason, but purely for the sake of being witty.' We are at no loss about the meaning here; but the construction would evidently be mended by disposing of the circumstance, 'about an age or two ago,' in such a manner as not to separate the relative *who* from its antecedent *our countrymen;* in this way: 'About an age or two ago, this kind of wit was very much in vogue among our countrymen, who did not practise it for any oblique reason, but purely for the sake of being witty.'— Spectator, No. 412. 'We no where meet with a more glorious and pleasing show in nature, than what appears in the heavens at the rising and setting of the sun, *which* is wholly made up of those different stains of light, that shew themselves in clouds of a different situation.' *Which* is here designed to connect with the word *show*, as its antecedent; but it stands so wide from it, tha

without a careful attention to the sense, we should be naturally led, by the rules of syntax, to refer it to the rising and setting of the sun, or to the sun itself; and hence, an indistinctness is thrown over the whole sentence. The following passage in Bishop Sherlock's Sermons (vol. ii. serm. 15.) is still more censurable: 'It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, by heaping up treasures, which nothing can protect us against, but the good providence of our Heavenly Father.' *Which*, always refers grammatically to the immediately preceding substantive, which here is 'treasures;' and this would make nonsense of the whole period. Every one feels this impropriety. The sentence ought to have stood thus: 'It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, which nothing can protect us against, but the good providence of our Heavenly Father.'

Of the like nature is the following inaccuracy of Dean Swift's. He is recommending to young clergymen, to write their sermons fully and distinctly. 'Many,' says he, 'act so directly contrary to this method, that from a habit of saving time and paper, which they acquired at the university, they write in so diminutive a manner, that they can hardly read what they have written.' He certainly does not mean, that they had acquired time and paper at the university, but that they had acquired this habit there; and therefore his words ought to have run thus: 'From a habit which they have acquired at the university of saving time and paper, they write in so diminutive a manner.' In another passage, the same author has left his meaning altogether uncertain, by misplacing a relative. It is in the conclusion of his letter to a member of parliament, concerning the sacramental test: 'Thus I have fairly given you, Sir, my own opinion, as well as that of a great majority of both houses here, relating to this weighty affair; upon which I am confident you may securely reckon.' Now I ask, what it is he would have his correspondent to reckon upon, securely? The natural construction leads to these words, 'this weighty affair.' But, as it would be difficult to make any sense of this, it is more probable he meant that the majority of both houses might be securely reckoned upon; though certainly this meaning, as the words are arranged, is obscurely expressed. The sentence would be amended by arranging it thus; 'Thus, Sir, I have given you my own opinion, relating to this weighty affair, as well as that of a great majority of both houses here; upon which I am confident you may securely reckon.'

Several other instances might be given; but I reckon those which I have produced sufficient to make the rule understood, that, in the construction of sentences, one of the first things to be attended to, is, the marshalling of the words in such order as

shall most clearly mark the relation of the several parts of the sentence to one another; particularly, that adverbs shall always be made to adhere closely to the words which they are intended to qualify; that, where a circumstance is thrown in, it shall never hang loose in the midst of a period, but be determined by its place to one or other member of it; and that every relative word which is used, shall instantly present its antecedent to the mind of the reader, without the least obscurity. I have mentioned these three cases, because I think they are the most frequent occasions of ambiguity creeping into sentences.

With regard to relatives, I must farther observe, that obscurity often arises from the too frequent repetition of them, particularly of the pronouns, *who*, and *they*, and *them*, and *theirs*, when we have occasion to refer to different persons; as, in the following sentence of Archbishop Tillotson (vol. i. serm. 42): 'Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others; and think that their reputation obscures them, and their commendable qualities stand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their virtues may not obscure them.' This is altogether careless writing. It renders style often obscure, always embarrassed and inelegant. When we find these personal pronouns crowding too fast upon us, we have often no method left, but to throw the whole sentence into some other form, which may avoid those frequent references to persons who have before been mentioned.

All languages are liable to ambiguities. Quinctilian gives us some instances in the Latin, arising from faulty arrangements. A man, he tells us, ordered, by his will, to have erected for him, after his death, 'Statuam auream hastam tenentem;' upon which arose a dispute at law, whether the whole statue, or the spear only, was to be of gold? The same author observes, very properly, that a sentence is always faulty, when the collocation of the words is ambiguous, though the sense can be gathered. If any one should say, 'Chremetem audivi percussisse Demeam;' this is ambiguous both in sense and structure, whether Chremes or Demea gave the blow. But if this expression were used, 'Se vidisse hominem librum scribentem;' although the meaning be clear, yet Quinctilian insists that the arrangement is wrong. 'Nam,' says he, 'etiamsi librum ab homine scribi pateat, non certè hominem a libro malè tamen composuerat, fèceratque ambiguum quantum in ipso fuit.' Indeed, to have the relation of every word and member of a sentence marked in the most proper and distinct manner, gives not clearness only, but grace and beauty to a sentence, making the mind pass smoothly and agreeably along all the parts of it.

I proceed now to the second quality of a well-arranged sentence, which I termed its Unity. This is a capital property. In every

composition, of whatever kind, some degree of unity is required, in order to render it beautiful. There must be always some connecting principle among the parts. Some one object must reign and be predominant. This, as I shall hereafter shew, holds in history, in epic and dramatic poetry, and in all orations. But most of all, in a single sentence, is required the strictest unity. For the very nature of a sentence implies one proposition to be expressed. It may consist of parts, indeed; but these parts must be so closely bound together, as to make the impression upon the mind, of one object, not of many. Now, in order to preserve this unity of a sentence, the following rules must be observed:

In the first place, during the course of the sentence, the scene should be changed as little as possible. We should not be hurried by sudden transitions from person to person, nor from subject to subject. There is commonly, in every sentence, some person or thing, which is the governing word. This should be continued so, if possible, from the beginning to the end of it. Should I express myself thus: 'After we came to anchor, they put me on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, who received me with the greatest kindness.' In this sentence, though the objects contained in it have a sufficient connexion with each other, yet, by this manner of representing them, by shifting so often both the place and the person, *we*, and *they*, and *I*, and *who*, they appear in such a disunited view, that the sense of connexion is almost lost. The sentence is restored to its proper unity, by turning it after the following manner: 'Having come to an anchor, I was put on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, and received with the greatest kindness.' Writers who transgress this rule, for the most part transgress, at the same time,

A second rule; Never to crowd into one sentence, things which have so little connexion, that they could bear to be divided into two or three sentences. The violation of this rule never fails to hurt and displease a reader. Its effect, indeed, is so bad, that of the two, it is the safer extreme, to err rather by too many short sentences, than by one that is overloaded and embarrassed. Examples abound in authors. I shall produce some, to justify what I now say. 'Archbishop Tillotson,' says an author of the History of England, 'died in this year. He was exceedingly beloved both by King William and Queen Mary, who nominated Dr. Tennison, bishop of Lincoln, to succeed him.' Who would expect the latter part of this sentence to follow, in consequence of the former? 'He was exceedingly beloved by both king and queen,' is the proposition of the sentence: we look for some proof of this, or at least something related to it, to follow; when we are on a sudden carried off to a new proposition, 'who nominated Dr. Tennison to succeed him.' The following is from Middleton's Life of Cicero:

'In this uneasy state, both of his public and private life, Cicero was oppressed by a new and cruel affliction, the death of his beloved daughter Tullia; which happened soon after her divorce from Dolabella, whose manners and humours were entirely disagreeable to her.' The principal object in this sentence is, the death of Tullia, which was the cause of her father's affliction; the date of it, as happening soon after her divorce from Dolabella, may enter into the sentence with propriety; but the subjunction of Dolabella's character is foreign to the main object, and breaks the unity and compactness of the sentence totally, by setting a new picture before the reader. The following sentence from a translation of Plutarch, is still worse: 'Their march,' says the author, speaking of the Greeks under Alexander, 'their march was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants fared hardly, having no other riches than a breed of lean sheep, whose flesh was rank and unsavoury, by reason of their continual feeding upon sea-fish.' Here the scene is changed upon us again and again. The march of the Greeks, the description of the inhabitants through whose country they travelled, the account of their sheep, and the cause of their sheep being ill-tasted food, form a jumble of objects, slightly related to each other, which the reader cannot, without much difficulty, comprehend under one view.

These examples, have been taken from sentences of no great length, yet over-crowded. Authors who deal in long sentences, are very apt to be faulty in this article. One need only open Lord Clarendon's History, to find examples every where. The long, involved, and intricate sentences of that author, are the greatest blemish of his composition: though in other respects, as a historian, he has considerable merit. In later, and more correct writers than Lord Clarendon, we find a period sometimes running out so far, and comprehending so many particulars, as to be more properly a discourse than a sentence. Take, for an instance, the following from Sir William Temple, in his Essay upon Poetry: 'The usual acceptation takes profit and pleasure for two different things; and not only calls the followers or votaries of them by the several names of busy and idle men; but distinguishes the faculties of the mind, that are conversant about them, calling the operations of the first, wisdom; and of the other, wit; which is a Saxon word used to express what the Spaniards and Italians call *ingenio*, and the French *esprit*, both from the Latin; though I think wit more particularly signifies that of poetry, as may occur in remarks on the Runic language.' When one arrives at the end of such a puzzled sentence, he is surprised to find himself got to so great a distance from the object with which he at first set out.

Lord Shaftesbury, often betrayed into faults by his love of magnificence, shall afford us the next example. It is in his Rhapsody,

where he is describing the cold regions: 'At length,' says he, 'the sun approaching, melts the snow, sets longing men at liberty, and affords them means and time to make provision against the next return of cold.' The first sentence is correct enough; but he goes on: 'It breaks the icy fetters of the main, where vast sea-monsters pierce through floating islands, with arms which can withstand the crystal rock; whilst others, who of themselves seem great as islands, are by their bulk alone armed against all but Man, whose superiority over creatures of such stupendous size and force, should make him mindful of his privilege of reason, and force him humbly to adore the great Composer of these wondrous frames, and the Author of his own superior wisdom.' Nothing can be more unhappy or embarrassed than this sentence; the worse too, as it is intended to be descriptive, where every thing should be clear. It forms no distinct image whatever. The *it*, at the beginning, is ambiguous, whether it mean the sun or the cold. The object is changed three times in the sentence; beginning with the sun, which breaks the icy fetters of the main; then the sea-monsters become the principal personages; and lastly, by a very unexpected transition, man is brought into view, and receives a long and serious admonition before the sentence closes. I do not at present insist on the impropriety of such expressions as, *God's being the composer of frames;* and the sea-monsters having *arms that withstand rocks.* Shaftesbury's strength lay in reasoning and sentiment, more than in description; however much his descriptions have been sometimes admired.

I shall only give one instance more on this head, from Dean Swift; in his Proposal, too, for correcting the English Language: where, in place of a sentence, he has given a loose dissertation upon several subjects. Speaking of the progress of our language, after the time of Cromwell: 'To this succeeded,' says he, 'that licentiousness, which entered with the Restoration, and, from infecting our religion and morals, fell to corrupt our language; which last was not likely to be much improved by those, who at that time made up the court of King Charles the Second; either such as had followed him in his banishment, or who had been altogether conversant in the dialect of these fanatic times; or young men who had been educated in the same country; so that the court, which used to be the standard of correctness and propriety of speech, was then, and I think has ever since continued, the worst school in England for that accomplishment; and so will remain, till better care be taken in the education of our nobility, that they may set out into the world with some foundation of literature, in order to qualify them for patterns of politeness.' How many different facts, reasonings, and observations, are here presented to the mind at once! and yet so linked together by the

author, that they all make parts of a sentence, which admits of no greater division in pointing, than a semicolon between any of its members! Having mentioned pointing, I shall here take notice, that it is in vain to propose, by arbitrary punctuation, to amend the defects of a sentence, to correct its ambiguity, or to prevent its confusion. For commas, colons, and points, do not make the proper divisions of thought; but only serve to mark those which arise from the tenor of the author's expression, and, therefore, they are proper or not, just according as they correspond to the natural division of the sense. When they are inserted in wrong places they deserve, and will meet with, no regard.

I proceed to a third rule, for preserving the unity of sentences; which is, to keep clear of all parentheses in the middle of them. On some occasions, they may have a spirited appearance; as prompted by a certain vivacity of thought, which can glance happily aside, as it is going along. But, for the most part their effect is extremely bad: being a sort of wheels within wheels; sentences in the midst of sentences; the perplexed method of disposing of some thought, which a writer wants art to introduce in its proper place. It were needless to give many instances, as they occur so often among incorrect writers. I shall produce one from Lord Bolingbroke, the rapidity of whose genius and manner of writing, betrays him frequently into inaccuracies of this sort. It is in the introduction to his Idea of a Patriot King, where he writes thus: 'It seems to me, that, in order to maintain the system of the world, at a certain point, far below that of ideal perfection (for we are made capable of conceiving what we are incapable of attaining), but, however, sufficient upon the whole, to constitute a state easy and happy, or at the worst, tolerable; I say, it seems to me, that the Author of nature has thought fit to mingle, from time to time, among the societies of men, a few, and but a few, of those on whom he is graciously pleased to bestow a larger portion of the ethereal spirit, than is given in the ordinary course of his government, to the sons of men.' A very bad sentence this; into which, by the help of a parenthesis, and other interjected circumstances, his lordship had contrived to thrust so many things that he is forced to begin the construction again with the phrase *I say*, which, whenever it occurs, may be always assumed as a sure mark of a clumsy ill-constructed sentence; excusable in speaking, where the greatest accuracy is not expected, but in polished writing, unpardonable.

I shall add only one rule more for the unity of a sentence, which is to bring it always to a full and perfect close. Every thing that is one, should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. I need not take notice, that an unfinished sentence is no sentence at all, according to any grammatical rule. But very often we meet

with sentences, that are, so to speak, more than finished. When we have arrived at what we expected was to be the conclusion, when we are come to the word on which the mind is naturally led, by what went before, to rest; unexpectedly, some circumstance pops out, which ought to have been omitted, or to have been disposed of elsewhere; but which is left lagging behind, like a tail adjected to the sentence; somewhat that, as Mr. Pope describes the Alexandrine line,

'Like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.'

All these adjections to the proper close, disfigure a sentence extremely. They give it a lame ungraceful air, and, in particular, they break its unity. Dean Swift, for instance, in his Letter to a Young Clergyman, speaking of Cicero's writings, expresses himself thus: 'With these writings young divines are more conversant, than with those of Demosthenes, who, by many degrees, excelled the other; at least, as an orator.' Here the natural close of the sentence is at these words, 'excelled the other.' These words conclude the proposition; we look for no more; and the circumstance added, 'at least, as an orator,' comes in with a very halting pace. How much more compact would the sentence have been, if turned thus: 'With these writings young divines are more conversant, than with those of Demosthenes, who, by many degrees, as an orator at least, excelled the other.' In the following sentence, from Sir William Temple, the adjection of the sentence is altogether foreign to it. Speaking of Burnet's Theory of the Earth, and Fontenelle's Plurality of Worlds, 'The first,' says he, 'could not end his learned treatise without a panegyric of modern learning in comparison of the ancient; and the other falls so grossly into the censure of the old poetry, and preference of the new, that I could not read either of these strains without some indignation; which no quality among men is so apt to raise in me as self-sufficiency.' The word 'indignation' concluded the sentence; the last member, 'which no quality among men is so apt to raise in me as self-sufficiency,' is a proposition altogether new, added after the proper close.

LECTURE XII.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

Having treated of perspicuity and unity, as necessary to be studied in the structure of sentences, I proceed to the third quality of a correct sentence, which I term Strength. By this I mean, such a disposition of the several words and members, as shall

bring out the sense to the best advantage; as shall render the impression which the period is designed to make, most full and complete; and give every word, and every member, their due weight and force. The two former qualities of perspicuity and unity, are, no doubt, absolutely necessary to the production of this effect; but more is still requisite. For a sentence may be clear enough, it may also be compact enough in all its parts, or have the requisite unity; and yet, by some unfavourable circumstance in the structure, it may fail in that strength or liveliness of impression which a more happy arrangement would have produced.

The first rule which I shall give, for promoting the strength of a sentence, is to divest it of all redundant words. These may, sometimes, be consistent with a considerable degree both of clearness and unity; but they are always enfeebling. They make the sentence move along tardy and encumbered;

> Est brevitate opus, ut currat sententia, neu se
> Impediat verbis, lassas onerantibus aures.*

It is a general maxim, that any words which do not add some importance to the meaning of a sentence, always spoil it. They cannot be superfluous, without being hurtful. 'Obstat,' says Quinctilian, 'quicquid non adjuvat.' All that can be easily supplied in the mind, is better left out in the expression. Thus: 'Content with deserving a triumph, he refused the honour of it,' is better language than to say, 'Being content with deserving a triumph, he refused the honour of it.' I consider it, therefore, as one of the most useful exercises of correction, upon reviewing what we have written or composed, to contract that round-about method of expression, and to lop off those useless excrescences which are commonly found in a first draught. Here a severe eye should be employed; and we shall always find our sentences acquire more vigour and energy when thus retrenched; provided always, that we run not into the extreme of pruning so very close, as to give a hardness and dryness to style. For here, as in all other things, there is a due medium. Some regard, though not the principal, must be had to fulness and swelling of sound. Some leaves must be left to surround and shelter the fruit.

As sentences should be cleared of redundant words, so also of redundant members. As every word ought to present a new idea, so every member ought to contain a new thought. Opposed to this, stands the fault we sometimes meet with, of the last member of a period being no other than the echo of the former, or the repetition of it in somewhat a different form. For example; speaking of beauty, 'The very first discovery of it,' says Mr. Addison,

* 'Concise your diction, let your sense be clear,
Nor with a weight of words, fatigue the ear.'—FRANCIS.

strikes the mind with inward joy, and spreads delight through all its faculties.' (No. 412.) And elsewhere, 'It is impossible for us to behold the divine works with coldness or indifference, or to survey so many beauties, without a secret satisfaction and complacency.' (No. 413.) In both these instances, little or nothing is added by the second member of the sentence to what was already expressed in the first: and though the free and flowing manner of such an author as Mr. Addison, and the graceful harmony of his period, may palliate such negligences; yet, in general, it holds, that style, freed from this prolixity, appears both more strong and more beautiful. The attention becomes remiss, the mind falls into inaction, when words are multiplied without a corresponding multiplication of ideas.

After removing superfluities, the second direction I give, for promoting the strength of a sentence, is, to attend particularly to the use of copulatives, relatives, and all the particles employed for transition and connexion. These little words, *but, and, which, whose, where,* &c. are frequently the most important words of any; they are the joints or hinges upon which all sentences turn, and, of course, much, both of their gracefulness and strength, must depend upon such particles. The varieties in using them are, indeed, so infinite, that no particular system of rules respecting them can be given. Attention to the practice of the most accurate writers, joined with frequent trials of the different effects, produced by a different usage of those particles, must here direct us.* Some observations I shall mention, which have occurred to me as useful, without pretending to exhaust the subject.

What is called splitting of particles, or separating a preposition from the noun which it governs, is always to be avoided. As if I should say, 'Though virtue borrows no assistance from, yet it may often be accompanied by, the advantages of fortune.' In such instances we feel a sort of pain from the revulsion, or violent separation of two things, which, by their nature, should be closely united. We are put to a stand in thought; being obliged to rest for a little on the preposition by itself, which, at the same time, carries no significancy, till it is joined to its proper substantive noun.

Some writers needlessly multiply demonstrative and relative particles, by the frequent use of such phraseology as this: 'There is nothing which disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language.' In introducing a subject, or laying down a proposition to which we demand particular attention, this sort of style is very proper; but in the ordinary current of discourse, it is better to express ourselves more simply and shortly: 'Nothing disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language.'

* On this head Dr. Lowth's Short Introduction to English Grammar deserves to be consulted; where several niceties of the language are well pointed out.

Other writers make a practice of omitting the relative, in a phrase of a different kind from the former, where they think the meaning can be understood without it. As, 'The man I love.'—'The dominions we possessed, and the conquests we made.' But though this elliptical style be intelligible, and is allowable in conversation and epistolary writing, yet in all writings of a serious or dignified kind, it is ungraceful. There the relative should always be inserted in its proper place, and the construction filled up: 'The man whom I love.'—'The dominions which we possessed, and the conquests which we made.'

With regard to the copulative particle, *and*, which occurs so frequently in all kinds of composition, several observations are to be made. First, It is evident, that the unnecessary repetition of it enfeebles style. It has the same sort of effect as the frequent use of the vulgar phrase, *and so*, when one is telling a story in common conversation. We shall take a sentence from Sir William Temple for an instance. He is speaking of the refinement of the French language: 'The academy set up by Cardinal Richelieu, to amuse the wits of that age and country, and to divert them from raking into his politics and ministry, brought this into vogue; and the French wits have, for this last age, been wholly turned to the refinement of their style and language: and, indeed, with such success, that it can hardly be equalled, and runs equally through their verse and their prose.' Here are no fewer than eight *ands* in one sentence. This agreeable writer too often makes his sentences drag in this manner, by a careless multiplication of copulatives. It is strange how a writer so accurate as Dean Swift should have stumbled on so improper an application of this particle, as he has made in the following sentence; Essay on the Fates of Clergymen: 'There is no talent so useful towards rising in the world, or which puts men more out of the reach of fortune, than that quality generally possessed by the dullest sort of people, and is, in common language, called Discretion; a species of lower prudence, by the assistance of which,' &c. By the insertion of *and is*, in place of *which is*, he has not only clogged the sentence, but even made it ungrammatical.

But, in the next place, it is worthy of observation, that though the natural use of the conjunction, *and*, be to join objects together. and thereby, as one would think, to make their connexion more close; yet in fact, by dropping the conjunction, we often mark a closer connexion, a quicker succession of objects, than when it is inserted between them. Longinus makes this remark; which, from many instances, appears to be just: 'Veni, vidi, vici,'* expresses with more spirit the rapidity and quick succession of con-

* 'I came, I saw, I conquered.'

quest, than if connecting particles had been used. So, in the following description of a rout in Cæsar's Commentaries: 'Nostri, emissis pilis, gladiis rem gerunt; repente post tergum equitatus cernitur; cohortes aliæ appropinquant. Hostes terga vertunt fugientibus equites occurrunt; fit magna cædes.'*—Bell. Gall. 1. 7.

Hence, it follows, that when, on the other hand, we seek to prevent a quick transition from one object to another, when we are making some enumeration in which we wish that the objects should appear as distinct from each other as possible, and that the mind should rest, for a moment, on each object by itself; in this case, copulatives may be multiplied with peculiar advantage and grace. As when Lord Bolingbroke says, 'Such a man might fall a victim to power; but truth, and reason, and liberty would fall with him.' In the same manner, Cæsar describes an engagement with the Nervii: 'His equitibus facile pulsis ac proturbatis, incredibili celeritate ad flumen decurrerunt; ut pene uno tempore, et ad sylvas, et in flumine, et jam in manibus nostris, hostes viderentur.'†—Bell. Gall. 1. 2.

Here, although he is describing a quick succession of events, yet, as it is his intention to shew in how many places the enemy seemed to be at one time, the copulative is very happily redoubled, in order to paint more strongly the distinction of these several places.

This attention to the several cases, when it is proper to omit, and when to redouble the copulative, is of considerable importance to all who study eloquence. For it is a remarkable particularity in language, that the omission of a connecting particle should sometimes serve to make objects appear more closely connected; and that the repetition of it should distinguish and separate them in some measure from each other. Hence, the omission of it is used to denote rapidity; and the repetition of it is designed to retard and to aggravate. The reason seems to be, that, in the former case, the mind is supposed to be hurried so fast through a quick succession of objects, that it has not leisure to point out their connexion; it drops the copulatives in its hurry; and crowds the whole series together as if it were but one object. Whereas, when we enumerate, with a view to aggravate, the mind is supposed to proceed with a more slow and solemn pace; it marks fully the relation of each object to that which succeeds it; and by joining them together with several copulatives, makes you perceive,

* 'Our men, after having discharged their javelins, attack with sword in hand: of a sudden the cavalry make their appearance behind; other bodies of men are seen drawing near; the enemies turn their backs; the horse meet them in their flight; a great slaughter ensues.'

† 'The enemy, having easily beat off and scattered this body of horse, ran down with incredible celerity to the river, so that, almost at one moment of time, they appeared to be in the woods, and in the river, and in the midst of our troops.'

that the objects, though connected, are yet, in themselves, distinct; that they are many, not one. Observe, for instance, in the following enumeration, made by the apostle Paul, what additional weight and distinctness is given to each particular by the repetition of a conjunction. 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.' Rom. viii. 38, 39. So much with regard to the use of copulatives.

I proceed to a third rule for promoting the strength of a sentence, which is, to dispose of the capital word, or words, in that place of the sentence where they will make the fullest impression. That such capital words there are in every sentence, on which the meaning principally rests, every one must see; and that these words should possess a conspicuous and distinguished place, is equally plain. Indeed, that place of the sentence where they will make the best figure, whether the beginning or the end, or sometimes even the middle, cannot, as far as I know, be ascertained by any precise rule. This must vary with the nature of the sentence. Perspicuity must ever be studied in the first place, and the nature of our language allows no great liberty in the choice of collocation. For the most part, with us, the important words are placed in the beginning of the sentence. So Mr. Addison; 'The pleasures of the imagination, taken in their full extent, are not so gross as those of sense, nor so refined as those of the understanding.' And this, indeed, seems the most plain and natural order, to place that in the front which is the chief object of the proposition we are laying down. Sometimes, however, when we intend to give weight to a sentence, it is of advantage to suspend the meaning for a little, and then bring it out full at the close: 'Thus,' says Mr. Pope, 'on whatever side we contemplate Homer, what principally strikes us, is his wonderful invention.' (Pref. to Homer.)

The Greek and Latin writers had a considerable advantage above us, in this part of style. By the great liberty of inversion which their languages permitted, they could choose the most advantageous situation for every word; and had it thereby in their power to give their sentences more force. Milton, in his prose works, and some other of our old English writers, endeavour to imitate them in this. But the forced constructions which they employed, produced obscurity; and the genius of our language, as it is now written and spoken, will not admit such liberties. Mr. Gordon, who followed this inverted style, in his translation of Tacitus, has, sometimes, done such violence to the language as even to appear ridiculous; as in this expression: 'Into this hole thrust themselves, three Roman senators.' He has translated so simple a phrase as, 'Nullum eâ tempestate bellum,' by, 'War at that time

there was none.' However, within certain bounds, and to a limited degree, our language does admit of inversions; and they are practised with success by the best writers. So Mr. Pope, speaking of Homer, 'The praise of judgment Virgil has justly contested with him, but his invention remains yet unrivalled.' It is evident, that, in order to give the sentence its due force, by contrasting properly the two capital words, 'judgment and invention,' this is a happier arrangement than if he had followed the natural order, which was, 'Virgil has justly contested with him the praise of judgment, but his invention remains yet unrivalled.'

Some writers practised this degree of inversion, which our language bears, much more than others; Lord Shaftesbury, for instance, much more than Mr. Addison; and to this sort of arrangement is owing, in a great measure, that appearance of strength, dignity, and varied harmony, which Lord Shaftesbury's style possesses. This will appear from the following sentences of his Inquiry into Virtue; where all the words are placed, not strictly in the natural order, but with that artificial construction which may give the period most emphasis and grace. He is speaking of the misery of vice: 'This, as to the complete immoral state, is, what of their own accord men readily remark. Where there is this absolute degeneracy, this total apostacy from all candour, trust, or equity, there are few who do not see and acknowledge the misery which is consequent. Seldom is the case misconstrued when at worst. The misfortune is, that we look not on this depravity, nor consider how it stands, in less degrees. As if, to be absolutely immoral, were, indeed, the greatest misery; but, to be so in a little degree, should be no misery or harm at all Which to allow, is just as reasonable as to own, that 'tis the greatest ill of a body to be in the utmost manner maimed or distorted; but that, to lose the use only of one limb, or to be impaired in some single organ or member, is no ill worthy the least notice.' (Vol. ii. p. 82.) Here is no violence done to the language, though there are many inversions. All is stately, and arranged with art; which is the great characteristic of this author's style.

We need only open any page of Mr. Addison, to see quite a different order in the construction of sentences. 'Our sight is the most perfect, and most delightful of all our senses. It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action, without being tired, or satiated with its proper enjoyments. The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours; but, at the same time, it is very much straitened and confined in its operations,' &c. (Spectator, No. 411.) In this strain he always proceeds, following the most natural and

obvious order of the language; and if, by this means, he has less pomp and majesty than Shaftesbury, he has, in return, more nature, more ease and simplicity; which are beauties of a higher order.

But whether we practise inversion or not, and in whatever part of the sentence we dispose of the capital words, it is always a point of great moment, that these capital words shall stand clear and disentangled from any other words that would clog them. Thus, when there are any circumstances of time, place, or other limitations, which the principal object of our sentence requires to have connected with it, we must take especial care to dispose of them, so as not to cloud that principal object, nor to bury it under a load of circumstances. This will be made clearer by an example. Observe the arrangement of the following sentence, in Lord Shaftesbury's Advice to an Author. He is speaking of modern poets, as compared with the ancient: 'If, whilst they profess only to please, they secretly advise, and give instruction, they may now, perhaps, as well as formerly, be esteemed, with justice, the best and most honourable among authors.' This is a well-constructed sentence. It contains a great many circumstances and adverbs, necessary to qualify the meaning; *only, secretly, as well, perhaps, now, with justice, formerly;* yet these are placed with so much art as neither to embarrass nor weaken the sentence; while that which is the capital object in it, viz. 'Poets being justly esteemed the best and most honourable among authors,' comes out in the conclusion clear and detached, and possesses its proper place. See, now, what would have been the effect of a different arrangement. Suppose him to have placed the members of the sentence thus: 'If, whilst they profess to please only, they advise and give instruction secretly, they may be esteemed the best and most honourable among authors, with justice, perhaps, now, as well as formerly.' Here we have precisely the same words and the same sense; but, by means of the circumstances being so intermingled as to clog the capital words, the whole becomes perplexed, without grace, and without strength.

A fourth rule for constructing sentences with proper strength, is, to make the members of them go on rising and growing in their importance above one another. This sort of arrangement is called a Climax, and is always considered as a beauty in composition. From what cause it pleases, is abundantly evident. In all things, we naturally love to ascend to what is more and more beautiful, rather than to follow the retrograde order. Having had once some considerable object set before us, it is with pain we are pulled back to attend to an inferior circumstance. 'Cavendum est,' says Quinctilian, whose authority I always willingly quote, 'ne decrescat oratio, et fortiori subjungatur aliquid infirmius; sicut, sacrile-

gio, fur; aut latroni petulans. Augeri enim debent sententiæ et insurgere.'* Of this beauty, in the construction of sentences, the Orations of Cicero furnish many examples. His pompous manner naturally led him to study it; and, generally in order to render the climax perfect, he makes both the sense and the sound rise together, with a very magnificent swell. So in his oration for Milo, speaking of a design of Clodius's for assassinating Pompey: 'Atqui si res, si vir, si tempus ullum dignum fuit, certè hæc in illâ causâ summa omnia fuerunt. Insidiator erat in Foro collocatus, atque in Vestibulo ipso Senatûs; ei viro autem mors parabatur, cujus in vitâ nitebatur salus civitatis; eo porrò reipublicæ tempore, quo si unus ille occidisset, non hæc solùm civitas, sed gentes omnes concidissent.' The following instance, from Lord Bolingbroke, is also beautiful: 'This decency, this grace, this propriety of manners to character, is so essential to princes in particular, that, whenever it is neglected, their virtues lose a great degree of lustre, and their defects acquire much aggravation. Nay more; by neglecting this decency and this grace, and for want of a sufficient regard to appearances, even their virtues may betray them into failings, their failings into vices, and their vices into habits unworthy of princes, and unworthy of men.' (Idea of a Patriot King.)

I must observe, however, that this sort of full and oratorial climax, can neither be always obtained, nor ought to be always sought after. Only some kinds of writing admit such sentences; and to study them too frequently, especially if the subject require not so much pomp, is affected and disagreeable. But there is something approaching to a climax, which it is a general rule to study, 'ne decrescat oratio,' as Quinctilian speaks, 'et ne fortiori subjungatur aliquid infirmius.' A weaker assertion or proposition should never come after a stronger one, and when our sentence consists of two members, the longest should, generally, be the concluding one. There is a twofold reason for this last direction. Periods thus divided, are pronounced more easily; and the shortest member being placed first, we carry it more readily in our memory as we proceed to the second, and see the connexion of the two more clearly. Thus, to say, 'When our passions have forsaken us, we flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken them,' is both more graceful and more clear, than to begin with the longest part of the proposition: 'We flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken our passions, when they have forsaken us.' In general, it is always agreeable to find a sentence

* 'Care must be taken that our composition shall not fall off, and that a weaker expression shall not follow one of more strength; as if, after sacrilege, we should bring in theft; or, having mentioned a robbery, we should subjoin petulance. Sentences ought always to rise and grow.'

rising upon us, and growing in its importance to the very last word, when this construction can be managed without affectation or unseasonable pomp. 'If we rise yet higher,' says Mr. Addison, very beautifully, 'and consider the fixed stars as so many oceans of flame, that are each of them attended with a different set of planets; and still discover new firmaments and new lights, that are sunk farther in those unfathomable depths of ether; we are lost in such a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the magnificence and immensity of nature.' (Spect. No. 420.) Hence follows clearly,

A fifth rule for the strength of sentences; which is, to avoid concluding them with an adverb, a preposition, or any inconsiderable word. Such conclusions are always enfeebling and degrading. There are sentences, indeed, where the stress and significancy rest chiefly upon some words of this kind. In this case they are not to be considered as circumstances, but as the capital figures; and ought, in propriety, to have the principal place allotted them. No fault, for instance, can be found with this sentence of Bolingbroke's; 'In their prosperity my friends shall never hear of me; in their adversity, always.' Where *never*, and *always*, being emphatical words, were to be so placed, as to make a strong impression. But I speak now of those inferior parts of speech, when introduced as circumstances, or as qualifications of more important words. In such case they should always be disposed of in the least conspicuous parts of the period; and so classed with other words of greater dignity, as to be kept in their proper secondary station. Agreeably to this rule, we should always avoid concluding with any of those particles which mark the cases of nouns,—*of, to, from, with, by*. For instance, it is a great deal better to say, 'Avarice is a crime of which wise men are often guilty,' than to say, 'Avarice is a crime which wise men are often guilty of.' This is a phraseology which all correct writers shun; and with reason. For, besides the want of dignity which arises from those monosyllables at the end, the imagination cannot avoid resting, for a little, on the import of the word which closes the sentence: and, as those prepositions have no import of their own, but only serve to point out the relations of other words, it is disagreeable for the mind to be left pausing on a word, which does not, by itself, produce any idea, nor form any picture in the fancy.

For the same reason, verbs which are used in a compound sense, with some of these prepositions, are, though not so bad, yet still not so beautiful conclusions of a period; such as, *bring about, lay hold of, come over to, clear up*, and many other of this kind; instead of which, if we can employ a simple verb, it always terminates the sentence with more strength. Even the pronoun, *it*, though it has the import of a substantive noun, and indeed

often forces itself upon us unavoidably, yet, when we want to give dignity to a sentence, should, if possible, be avoided in the conclusion; more especially when it is joined with some of the prepositions, as, *with it, in it, to it.* In the following sentence of the Spectator, which otherwise is abundantly noble, the bad effect of this close is sensible: 'There is not, in my opinion, a more pleasing and triumphant consideration in religion, than this, of the perpetual progress which the soul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period in it.' (No. 111.) How much more graceful the sentence, if it had been so constructed as to close with the word *period.*

Besides particles and pronouns, any phrase, which expresses a circumstance only, always brings up the rear of a sentence with a bad grace. We may judge of this, by the following sentence from Lord Bolingbroke (Letter on the State of Parties at the Accession of King George I.): 'Let me therefore conclude by repeating, that division has caused all the mischief we lament; that union alone can retrieve it; and that a great advance towards this union was the coalition of parties, so happily begun, so successfully carried on, and of late so unaccountably neglected; to say no worse.' This last phrase, *to say no worse,* occasions a sad falling off at the end; so much the more unhappy, as the rest of the period is conducted after the manner of a climax, which we expect to find growing to the last.

The proper disposition of such circumstances in a sentence is often attended with considerable trouble, in order to adjust them so, as shall consist equally with the perspicuity and the grace of the period. Though necessary parts, they are, however, like unshapely stones in a building, which try the skill of an artist, where to place them with the least offence. 'Jungantur,' says Quinctilian, 'quo congruunt maximè; sicut in structurâ saxorum rudium, etiam ipsa enormitas invenit cui applicari, et in quo possit insistere.'*

The close is always an unsuitable place for them. When the sense admits it, the sooner they are dispatched, generally speaking, the better; that the more important and significant words may possess the last place, quite disencumbered. It is a rule too, never to crowd too many circumstances together, but rather to intersperse them in different parts of the sentence, joined with the capital words on which they depend; provided that care be taken, as I before directed, not to clog those capital words with them. For instance, when Dean Swift says, 'What I had the

* 'Let them be inserted wherever the happiest place for them can be found; as, in a structure composed of rough stones, there are always places where the most irregular and unshapely may find some adjacent one to which it can be joined, and some basis on which it may rest.'

honour of mentioning to your lordship, some time ago, in conversation, was not a new thought.' (Letter to the Earl of Oxford.) These two circumstances, *some time ago*, and *in conversation*, which are here put together, would have had a better effect disjoined thus: 'What I had the honour, sometime ago, of mentioning to your lordship in conversation.' And in the following sentence of Lord Bolingbroke's (Remarks on the History of England): 'A monarchy, limited like ours, may be placed, for aught I know, as it has been often represented, just in the middle point, from whence a deviation leads, on the one hand, to tyranny, and on the other to anarchy.' The arrangement would have been happier thus: 'A monarchy, limited like ours, may, for aught I know, be placed, as it has often been represented, just in the middle point,' &c.

I shall give only one rule more, relating to the strength of a sentence; which is, that in the members of a sentence where two things are compared or contrasted to each other; where either a resemblance or an opposition is intended to be expressed; some resemblance, in the language and construction, should be preserved. For when the things themselves correspond to each other, we naturally expect to find the words corresponding too. We are disappointed when it is otherwise; and the comparison, or contrast, appears more imperfect. Thus, when Lord Bolingbroke says, 'The laughers will be for those who have most wit; the serious part of mankind for those who have most reason on their side;' (Dissert. on Parties, Pref.) the opposition would have been more complete, if he had said, 'The laughers will be for those who have most wit; the serious for those who have most reason on their side.' The following passage from Mr. Pope's Preface to his Homer, fully exemplifies the rule I am now giving: 'Homer was the greater genius; Virgil the better artist; in the one, we most admire the man; in the other, the work. Homer hurries us with a commanding impetuosity; Virgil leads us with an attractive majesty. Homer scatters with a generous profusion; Virgil bestows with a careful magnificence. Homer, like the Nile, pours out his riches with a sudden overflow; Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a constant stream.——And when we look upon their machines, Homer seems like his own Jupiter in his terrors, shaking Olympus, scattering the lightnings, and firing the heavens; Virgil, like the same power in his benevolence, counselling with the gods, laying plans for empires, and ordering his whole creation.'—Periods thus constructed, when introduced with propriety, and not returning too often, have a sensible beauty. But we must beware of carrying our attention to this beauty too far. It ought only to be occasionally studied, when comparison or opposition of objects naturally leads to it. If such a construction as this be aimed at in all our sentences, it leads to a disagreeable uniformity; produces a

regularly returning clink in the period, which tires the ear; and plainly discovers affectation. Among the ancients, the style of Isocrates is faulty in this respect; and, on that account, by some of their best critics, particularly by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, he is severely censured.

This finishes what I had to say concerning sentences, considered, with respect to their meaning, under the three heads of perspicuity, unity, and strength. It is a subject on which I have insisted fully, for two reasons: First, because it is a subject, which, by its nature, can be rendered more didactic, and subjected more to precise rule, than many other subjects of criticism; and next, because it appears to me of considerable importance and use.

For, though many of those attentions, which I have been recommending, may appear minute, yet their effect, upon writing and style, is much greater than might, at first, be imagined. A sentiment which is expressed in a period, clearly, neatly, and happily arranged, makes always a stronger impression on the mind than one that is feeble or embarrassed. Every one feels this upon a comparison; and if the effect be sensible in one sentence, how much more in a whole discourse, or composition, that is made up of such sentences.

The fundamental rule of the construction of sentences, and into which all others might be resolved, undoubtedly is, to communicate, in the clearest and most natural order, the ideas which we mean to transfuse into the minds of others. Every arrangement that does most justice to the sense, and expresses it to most advantage, strikes us as beautiful. To this point have tended all the rules I have given. And, indeed, did men always think clearly, and were they, at the same time, fully masters of the language in which they write, there would be occasion for few rules. Their sentences would then, of course, acquire all those properties of precision, unity, and strength, which I have recommended. For we may rest assured, that, whenever we express ourselves ill, there is, besides the mismanagement of language, for the most part, some mistake in our manner of conceiving the subject. Embarrassed, obscure, and feeble sentences, are generally, if not always, the result of embarrassed, obscure, and feeble thought. Thought and language act and re-act upon each other mutually. Logic and rhetoric have here, as in many other cases, a strict connexion; and he that is learning to arrange his sentences with accuracy and order, is learning, at the same time, to think with accuracy and order; an observation which alone will justify all the care and attention we have bestowed on this subject.

LECTURE XIII.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.—HARMONY.

Hitherto we have considered sentences, with respect to their meaning, under the heads of perspicuity, unity, and strength. We are now to consider them, with respect to their sound, their harmony, or agreeableness to the ear; which was the last quality belonging to them that I proposed to treat of.

Sound is a quality much inferior to sense; yet such as must not be disregarded. For, as long as sounds are the vehicle of conveyance for our ideas, there will be always a very considerable connexion between the idea which is conveyed, and the nature of the sound which conveys it. Pleasing ideas can hardly be transmitted to the mind, by means of harsh and disagreeable sounds. The imagination revolts as soon as it hears them uttered. 'Nihil,' says Quinctilian, 'potest intrare in affectum quod in aure, velut quodam vestibulo statim offendit.'* Music has naturally a great power over all men to prompt and facilitate certain emotions: insomuch, that there are hardly any dispositions which we wish to raise in others, but certain sounds may be found concordant to those dispositions, and tending to promote them. Now language may, in some degree, be rendered capable of this power of music; a circumstance which must needs heighten our idea of language as a wonderful invention. Not content with simply interpreting our ideas to others, it can give them those ideas enforced by corresponding sounds; and to the pleasure of communicated thought, can add the new and separate pleasure of melody.

In the harmony of periods, two things may be considered. First, agreeable sound, or modulation in general, without any particular expression: next, the sound so ordered, as to become expressive of the sense. The first is the more common; the second, the higher beauty.

First, let us consider agreeable sound, in general, as the property of a well-constructed sentence: and, as it was of prose sentences we have hitherto treated, we shall confine ourselves to them under this head. This beauty of musical construction in prose, it is plain, will depend upon two things; the choice of words, and the arrangement of them.

I begin with the choice of words; on which head there is not much to be said, unless I were to descend into a tedious and frivolous detail concerning the powers of the several letters, or simple sounds, of which speech is composed. It is evident that words

* 'Nothing can enter into the affections, which stumbles at the threshold, by offending the ear.'

are most agreeable to the ear which are composed of smooth and liquid sounds, where there is a proper intermixture of vowels and consonants; without too many harsh consonants rubbing against each other; or too many open vowels in succession, to cause a hiatus or disagreeable aperture of the mouth. It may always be assumed as a principle, that, whatever sounds are difficult in pronunciation, are, in the same proportion, harsh and painful to the ear. Vowels give softness; consonants, strength to the sound of words. The music of language requires a just proportion of both; and will be hurt, will be rendered either grating or effeminate, by an excess of either. Long words are commonly more agreeable to the ear than monosyllables. They please it by the composition or succession of sounds which they present to it; and accordingly, the most musical languages abound most in them. Among words of any length, those are the most musical, which do not run wholly either upon long or short syllables, but are composed of an intermixture of them; such as *repent, produce, velocity, celerity, independent, impetuosity.*

The next head, respecting the harmony which results from a proper arrangement of the words and members of a period, is more complex, and of greater nicety. For let the words themselves be ever so well chosen, and well sounding, yet, if they be ill disposed, the music of the sentence is utterly lost. In the harmonious structure and disposition of periods, no writer whatever, ancient or modern, equals Cicero. He had studied this with care; and was fond, perhaps to excess, of what he calls, the 'Plena ac numerosa oratio.' We need only open his writings to find instances that will render the effect of musical language sensible to every ear. What, for example, can be more full, round, and swelling, than the following sentence of the fourth oration against Catiline? 'Cogitate quantis laboribus fundatum imperium, quantâ virtute stabilitam libertatem, quantâ Deorum benignitate auctas exaggeratasque fortunas, una nox pene delerit.' In English, we may take, for an instance of a musical sentence, the following from Milton, in his treatise on Education: 'We shall conduct you to a hill-side, laborious, indeed, at the first ascent; but else, so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects, and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.' Every thing in this sentence conspires to promote the harmony. The words are happily chosen; full of liquids and soft sounds; *laborious, smooth, green, goodly, melodious, charming:* and these words so artfully arranged, that were we to alter the collocation of any one of them, we should, presently, be sensible of the melody suffering. For, let us observe, how finely the members of the period swell one above another. 'So smooth, so green,'— 'so full of goodly prospects, and melodious sounds on every side;' — till the ear, prepared by

this gradual rise, is conducted to that full close on which it rests with pleasure—'that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.'

The structure of periods, then, being susceptible of a very sensible melody, our next inquiry should be, How this melodious structure is formed, what are the principles of it, and by what laws is it regulated? And, upon this subject, were I to follow the ancient rhetoricians, it would be easy to give a great variety of rules. For here they have entered into a very minute and particular detail, more particular, indeed, than on any other head that regards language. They hold, that to prose, as well as to verse, there belong certain numbers, less strict indeed, yet such as can be ascertained by rule. They go so far as to specify the feet, as they are called, that is, the succession of long and short syllables, which should enter into the different members of a sentence, and to shew what the effect of each of these will be. Wherever they treat of the structure of sentences, it is always the music of them that makes the principal object. Cicero and Quinctilian are full of this. The other qualities, of precision, unity, and strength, which we consider as of great importance, they handle slightly; but when they come to the '*junctura et numerus,*' the modulation and harmony, there they are copious. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, one of the most judicious critics of antiquity, has written a treatise on the *Composition of Words in a Sentence*, which is altogether confined to their musical effect. He makes the excellency of a sentence to consist in four things; first, in the sweetness of single sounds; secondly, in the composition of sounds; that is, the numbers, or feet; thirdly, in change or variety of sound; and, fourthly, in sound suited to the sense. On all these points, he writes with great accuracy and refinement, and is very worthy of being consulted; though, were one now to write a book on the structure of sentences, we should expect to find the subject treated of in a more extensive manner.

In modern times, this whole subject of the musical structure of discourse, it is plain, has been much less studied: and, indeed, for several reasons, can be much less subjected to rule. The reasons it will be necessary to give, both to justify my not following the tract of the ancient rhetoricians on this subject, and to shew how it has come to pass, that a part of composition, which once made so conspicuous a figure, now draws much less attention.

In the first place, the ancient languages, I mean the Greek and the Roman, were much more susceptible than ours, of the graces and the powers of melody. The quantities of their syllables were more fixed and determined; their words were longer and more sonorous; their method of varying the terminations of nouns and verbs, both introduced a greater variety of liquid sounds, and freed

them from that multiplicity of little auxiliary words which we are obliged to employ; and, what is of the greatest consequence, the inversions which their languages allowed, gave them the power of placing their words in whatever order was most suited to a musical arrangement. All these were great advantages which they enjoyed above us, for harmony of period.

In the next place, the Greeks and Romans, the former especially, were, in truth, much more musical nations than we; their genius was more turned to delight in the melody of speech. Music is known to have been a more extensive art among them than it is with us; more generally studied, and applied to a greater variety of objects. Several learned men, particularly the Abbé du Bos, in his Reflections on Poetry and Painting, have clearly proved, that the theatrical compositions of the ancients, both their tragedies and comedies, were set to a kind of music. Whence, the *Modos fecit*, and the *Tibiis dextris et sinistris*, prefixed to the editions of Terence's Plays. All sort of declamation and public speaking was carried on by them in a much more musical tone than it is among us. It approached to a kind of chanting or recitative. Among the Athenians, there was what was called the Nomic Melody; or a particular measure prescribed to the public officers, in which they were to promulgate the laws to the people; lest by reading them with improper tones, the laws might be exposed to contempt. Among the Romans, there is a noted story of C. Gracchus, when he was declaiming in public, having a musician standing at his back, in order to give him the proper tones with a pipe or flute. Even when pronouncing those terrible tribunitial harangues, by which he inflamed the one half of the citizens of Rome against the other, this attention to the music of speech, was, in those times, it seems, thought necessary to success. Quinctilian, though he condemns the excess of this sort of pronunciation, yet allows a 'cantus obscurior' to be a beauty in a public speaker. Hence that variety of accents, acute, grave, and circumflex, which we find marked upon the Greek syllables, to express, not the quantity of them, but the tone in which they were to be spoken, the application of which is now wholly unknown to us. And though the Romans did not mark those accents in their writing, yet it appears from Quinctilian, that they used them in pronunciation: '*Quantum quale*,' says he, 'comparantes gravi, interrogantes acuto tenore concludunt.' As music, then, was an object much more attended to in speech, among the Greeks and Romans, than it is with us; as, in all kinds of public speaking, they employed a much greater variety of notes, of tones, or inflexions of voice, than we use; this is one clear reason of their paying a great attention to that construction of sentences, which might best suit this musical pronunciation.

It is farther known, that, in consequence of the genius of their languages, and of their manner of pronouncing them, the musical arrangement of sentences did, in fact, produce a greater effect in public speaking among them, than it could possibly do in any modern oration; another reason why it deserved to be more studied. Cicero, in his treatise entitled *Orator*, tells us, 'Conciones sæpe exclamare vidi, cum verba aptè cecidissent. Id enim expectant aures.'* And he gives a remarkable instance of the effect of an harmonious period upon a whole assembly, from a sentence of one of Carbo's Orations, spoken in his hearing. The sentence was, 'Patris dictum sapiens temeritas filii comprobravit.' By means of the sound of which, alone, he tells us, 'Tantus clamor concionis excitatus est, ut prorsus admirabile esset.' He makes us remark the feet of which these words consist, to which he ascribes the power of the melody; and shews how, by altering the collocation, the whole effect would be lost; as thus: 'Patris dictum sapiens comprobravit temeritas filii.' Now, though it be true that Carbo's sentence is extremely musical, and would be agreeable at this day, to an audience, yet I cannot believe that an English sentence, equally harmonious, would, by its harmony alone, produce any such effect on a British audience, or excite any such wonderful applause and admiration, as Cicero informs us this of Carbo produced. Our northern ears are too coarse and obtuse. The melody of speech has less power over us; and by our simpler and plainer method of uttering words, speech is, in truth, accompanied with less melody than it was among the Greeks and Romans.†

For these reasons, I am of opinion, that it is vain to think of bestowing the same attention upon the harmonious structure of our sentences, that was bestowed by these ancient nations. The doctrine of the Greek and Roman critics, on this head, has misled some to imagine, that it might be equally applied to our tongue; and that our prose writing might be regulated by spondees and trochees, and iambuses and pæons, and other metrical feet. But, first, our words cannot be measured, or, at least, can be measured very imperfectly by any feet of this kind. For, the quantity, the length and shortness of our syllables, is far from being so fixed and subjected to rule, as in the Greek and Roman tongues; but very often left arbitrary, and determined by the

* 'I have often been witness to bursts of exclamation in the public assemblies, when sentences closed musically, for that is a pleasure which the ear expects.'

† 'In versu quidem, theatra tota exclamant si fuit unâ syllabâ aut brevior aut longior. Nec vero multitudo pedes novit, nec ullos numeros tenet; nec illud quod offendit, aut cur, aut in quo offendat, intelligit; et tamen omnium longitudinum et brevitatum in sonis, sicut acutarum, graviumque vocum, judicium ipsa natura in auribus nostris collocavit.'—CICERO. Orator. c. 51.

emphasis and the sense. Next, though our prose could admit of such metrical regulation, yet from our plainer method of pronouncing all sort of discourse, the effect would not be at all so sensible to the ear, nor be relished with so much pleasure, as among the Greeks and Romans: and, lastly, this whole doctrine about the measures and numbers of prose, even as it is delivered by the ancient rhetoricians, themselves, is, in truth, in a great measure loose and uncertain. It appears, indeed, that the melody of discourse was a matter of infinitely more attention to them, than ever it has been to the moderns. But though they write a great deal about it, they have never been able to reduce it to any rules which could be of real use in practice. If we consult Cicero's *Orator*, where this point is discussed with the most minuteness, we shall see how much these ancient critics differed from one another, about the feet proper for the conclusion, and other parts of a sentence; and how much, after all, was left to the judgment of the ear. Nor, indeed, is it possible to give precise rules concerning this matter, in any language; as all prose composition must be allowed to run loose in its numbers; and, according as the tenor of a discourse varies, the modulation of sentences must vary infinitely.

But, although I apprehend, that this musical arrangement cannot be reduced into a system, I am far from thinking, that it is a quality to be neglected in composition. On the contrary, I hold its effect to be very considerable; and that every one who studies to write with grace, much more who seeks to pronounce in public with success, will be obliged to attend to it not a little. But it is his ear, cultivated by attention and practice, that must chiefly direct him. For any rules that can be given, on this subject, are very general. Some rules, however, there are, which may be of use to form the ear to the proper harmony of discourse. I proceed to mention such as appear to me most material.

There are two things on which the music of a sentence chiefly depends. These are, the proper distribution of the several members of it; and, the close or cadence of the whole.

First, I say, the distribution of the several members is to be carefully attended to. It is of importance to observe, that, whatever is easy and agreeable to the organs of speech, always sounds grateful to the ear. While a period is going on, the termination of each of its members forms a pause, or rest, in pronouncing: and these rests should be so distributed, as to make the course of the breathing easy, and, at the same time, should fall at such distances, as to bear a certain musical proportion to each other. This will be best illustrated by examples. The following sentence is from Archbishop Tillotson: 'This discourse concerning the easiness of God's commands does, all along, suppose and acknowledge

the difficulties of the first entrance upon a religious course; except only in those persons who have had the happiness to be trained up to religion by the easy and insensible degrees of a pious and virtuous education.' Here there is no harmony; nay, there is some degree of harshness and unpleasantness; owing principally to this, that there is, properly, no more than one pause or rest in the sentence, falling betwixt the two members into which it is divided; each of which is so long, as to occasion a considerable stretch of the breath in pronouncing it.

Observe, now, on the other hand, the ease with which the following sentence, from Sir William Temple, glides along, and the graceful intervals at which the pauses are placed. He is speaking sarcastically of man: 'But, God be thanked, his pride is greater than his ignorance, and what he wants in knowledge, he supplies by sufficiency. When he has looked about him, as far as he can, he concludes, there is no more to be seen; when he is at the end of his line, he is at the bottom of the ocean; when he has shot his best, he is sure none ever did, or even can, shoot better or beyond it. His own reason he holds to be the certain measure of truth; and his own knowledge, of what is possible in nature.'* Here every thing is, at once, easy to the breath, and grateful to the ear; and, it is this sort of flowing measure, this regular and proportional division of the members of his sentences, which renders Sir William Temple's style always agreeable. I must observe, at the same time, that a sentence, with too many rests, and these placed at intervals too apparently measured and regular, is apt to savour of affectation.

The next thing to be attended to, is, the close or cadence of the whole sentence, which, as it is always the part most sensible to the ear, demands the greatest care. So Quinctilian: 'Non igitur durum sit, neque abruptum, quo animi, velut, respirant ac reficiuntur. Hæc est sedes orationis; hoc auditor expectat; hic laus omnis declamat.'† The only important rule that can be given here, is, that when we aim at dignity or elevation, the sound should be made to grow to the last; the longest members of the period, and the

* Or this instance.—He is addressing himself to Lady Essex, upon the death of her child: 'I was once in hope, that what was so violent could not be long: but, when I observed your grief to grow stronger with age, and to increase, like a stream, the farther it ran; when I saw it draw out to such unhappy consequences, and to threaten no less than your child, your health and your life, I could no longer forbear this endeavour, nor end it without begging of you, for God's sake and for your own, for your children and your friends, your country and your family, that you would no longer abandon yourself to a disconsolate passion; but that you would, at length, awaken your piety, give way to your prudence, or, at least, rouse the invincible spirit of the Percys, that never yet shrunk at any disaster.'

† 'Let there be nothing harsh or abrupt in the conclusion of the sentence, on which the mind pauses and rests. This is the most material part in the structure of discourse. Here every hearer expects to be gratified; here his applause breaks forth.'

fullest and most sonorous words, should be reserved to the conclusion. As an example of this, the following sentence of Mr. Addison's may be given: 'It fills the mind (speaking of sight) with the largest variety of ideas; converses with its objects at the greatest distance; and continues the longest in action, without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments.' Every reader must be sensible of a beauty here, both in the proper division of the members and pauses, and the manner in which the sentence is rounded, and conducted to a full and harmonious close.

The same holds in melody, that I observed to take place with respect to significancy; that a falling-off at the end always hurts greatly. For this reason, particles, pronouns, and little words, are as ungracious to the ear, at the conclusion, as I formerly shewed they were inconsistent with strength of expression. It is more than probable, that the sense and the sound have here a mutual influence on each other. That which hurts the ear, seems to mar the strength of the meaning; and that which really degrades the sense, in consequence of this primary effect, appears also to have a bad sound. How disagreeable is the following sentence of an author, speaking of the Trinity! 'It is a mystery which we firmly believe the truth of, and humbly adore the depth of.' And how easily might it have been mended by this transposition! 'It is a mystery, the truth of which we firmly believe, and the depth of which we humbly adore.' In general, it seems to hold, that a musical close, in our language, requires either the last syllable, or the last but one, to be a long syllable. Words which consist mostly of short syllables, as, *contrary*, *particular*, *retrospect*, seldom conclude a sentence harmoniously, unless a run of long syllables, before, has rendered them agreeable to the ear.

It is necessary, however, to observe, that sentences, so constructed as to make the sound always swell and grow towards the end, and to rest either on a long or a penult long syllable, give a discourse the tone of declamation. The ear soon becomes acquainted with the melody, and is apt to be cloyed with it. If we would keep up the attention of the reader or hearer, if we would preserve vivacity and strength in our composition, we must be very attentive to vary our measures. This regards the distribution of the members, as well as the cadence of the period. Sentences constructed in a similar manner, with the pauses falling at equal intervals, should never follow one another. Short sentences should be intermixed with long and swelling ones, to render discourse sprightly, as well as magnificent. Even discords, properly introduced, abrupt sounds, departures from regular cadence, have sometimes a good effect. Monotony is the great fault into which writers are apt to fall, who are fond of harmonious arrangement: and to have only one tune or measure, is not much better than having none

at all. A very vulgar ear will enable a writer to catch some one melody, and to form the run of his sentences according to it: which soon proves disgusting. But a just and correct ear is requisite for varying and diversifying the melody, and hence we so seldom meet with authors, who are remarkably happy in this respect.

Though attention to the music of sentences must not be neglected, yet it must also be kept within proper bounds: for all appearances of an author's affecting harmony, are disagreeable; especially when the love of it betrays him so far, as to sacrifice, in any instance, perspicuity, precision, or strength of sentiment, to sound. All unmeaning words, introduced merely to round the period, or fill up the melody, *complementa numerorum*, as Cicero calls them, are great blemishes in writing. They are childish and puerile ornaments, by which a sentence always loses more in point of weight, than it can gain by such additions to the beauty of its sound. Sense has its own harmony, as well as sound; and, where the sense of a period is expressed with clearness, force, and dignity, it will seldom happen but the words will strike the ear agreeably; at least, a very moderate attention is all that is requisite for making the cadence of such a period pleasing: and the effect of greater attention is often no other, than to render composition languid and enervated. After all the labour which Quinctilian bestows on regulating the measures of prose, he comes at last, with his usual good sense, to this conclusion: 'In universum, si sit necesse, duram potiùs atque asperam compositionem malim esse, quam effeminatam ac enervem, qualis apud multos. Ideòque, vincta quædam de industriâ sunt solvenda, ne laborata videantur; neque ullum idoneum aut aptum verbum prætermittamus, gratiâ lenitatis.'* Lib. ix. c. 4.

Cicero, as I before observed, is one of the most remarkable patterns of a harmonious style. His love of it, however, is too visible; and the pomp of his numbers sometimes detracts from his strength. That noted close of his, *esse videatur*, which, in the oration Pro Lege Manilia, occurs eleven times, exposed him to censure among his contemporaries. We must observe, however, in defence of this great orator, that there is a remarkable union in his style, of harmony with ease, which is always a great beauty; and if his harmony be studied, that study appears to have cost him little trouble.

Among our English classics, not many are distinguished for musical arrangement. Milton, in some of his prose works, has very

* 'Upon the whole, I would rather choose, that composition should appear rough and harsh, if that be necessary, than that it should be enervated and effeminate, such as we find the style of too many. Some sentences, therefore, which we have studiously formed into melody, should be thrown loose, that they may not seem too much laboured; nor ought we ever to omit any proper or expressive word, for the sake of smoothing a period.'

finely turned periods; but the writers of his age indulged a liberty of inversion, which now would be reckoned contrary to purity of style: and though this allowed their sentences to be more stately and sonorous, yet it gave them too much of a Latinised construction and order. Of later writers, Shaftesbury is, upon the whole, the most correct in his numbers. As his ear was delicate, he has attended to music in all his sentences; and he is peculiarly happy in this respect, that he has avoided the monotony into which writers, who study the grace of sound, are very apt to fall: having diversified his periods with great variety. Mr. Addison has also much harmony in his style; more easy and smooth, but less varied than Lord Shaftesbury. Sir William Temple is, in general, very flowing and agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson is too often careless and languid; and is much outdone by Bishop Atterbury in the music of his periods. Dean Swift despised musical arrangement altogether.

Hitherto I have discoursed of agreeable sound, or modulation, in general. It yet remains to treat of a higher beauty of this kind; the sound adapted to the sense. The former was no more than a simple accompaniment, to please the ear; the latter supposes a peculiar expression given to the music. We may remark two degrees of it: First, the current of sound, adapted to the tenor of a discourse: next, a particular resemblance effected between some object, and the sounds that are employed in describing it.

First, I say, the current of sound may be adapted to the tenor of a discourse. Sounds have, in many respects, a correspondence with our ideas; partly natural, partly the effect of artificial associations. Hence it happens, that any one modulation of sound continued, imprints on our style a certain character and expression. Sentences constructed with the Ciceronian fulness and swell, produce the impression of what is important, magnificent, sedate; for this is the natural tone which such a course of sentiment assumes. But they suit no violent passion, no eager reasoning, no familiar address. These always require measures brisker, easier, and often more abrupt. And, therefore, to swell, or to let down the periods, as the subject demands, is a very important rule in oratory. No one tenor whatever, supposing it to produce no bad effect from satiety, will answer to all different compositions; nor even to all the parts of the same composition. It were as absurd to write a panegyric, and an invective, in a style of the same cadence, as to set the words of a tender love-song to the air of a warlike march.

Observe how finely the following sentence of Cicero is adapted, to represent the tranquillity and ease of a satisfied state: 'Etsi homini nihil est magis optandum quam prospera, æquabilis, perpetuaque fortuna, secundo vitæ sine ullâ offensione cursu; tamen, si mihi tranquilla et placata omnia fuissent, incredibili quâdam et

pene divinâ, quâ nunc vestro beneficio fruor, lætitiæ voluptate caruissem.'* Nothing was ever more perfect in its kind: it paints, if we may so speak, to the ear. But, who would not have laughed, if Cicero had employed such periods or such a cadence as this, in inveighing against Mark Antony, or Catiline? What is requisite, therefore, is, that we previously fix in our mind, a just idea of the general tone of sound which suits our subject; that is, which the sentiments we are to express most naturally assume, and in which they most commonly vent themselves; whether round and smooth, or stately and solemn, or brisk and quick, or interrupted and abrupt. This general idea must direct the modulation of our periods: to speak in the style of music, must give us the key-note, must form the ground of the melody; varied and diversified in parts, according as either our sentiments are diversified, or as is requisite for producing a suitable variety to gratify the ear.

It may be proper to remark, that our translators of the Bible have often been happy in suiting their numbers to the subject. Grave, solemn, and majestic subjects undoubtedly require such an arrangement of words as runs much on long syllables; and, particularly, they require the close to rest upon such. The very first verses of the Bible, are remarkable for this melody; 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth; and the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' Several other passages, particularly some of the Psalms, afford striking examples of this sort of grave, melodious construction. Any composition that rises considerably above the ordinary tone of prose, such as monumental inscriptions, and panegyrical characters, naturally runs into numbers of this kind.

But, in the next place, besides the general correspondence of the current of sound with the current of thought, there may be a more particular expression attempted, of certain objects, by means of resembling sounds. This can be sometimes accomplished in prose composition; but there only in a more faint degree; nor is it so much expected there. In poetry, chiefly, it is looked for; where attention to sound is more demanded, and where the inversions and liberties of poetical style give us a greater command of sound; assisted, too, by the versification, and that *cantus obscurior*, to which we are naturally led in reading poetry. This requires a little more illustration.

The sounds of words may be employed for representing, chiefly, three classes of objects; first, other sounds; secondly, motion; and, thirdly, the emotions and passions of the mind.

First, I say, by a proper choice of words, we may produce a resemblance of other sounds which we mean to describe; such as,

* Orat. ad Quirites, post Reditum.

the noise of waters, the roaring of winds, or the murmuring of streams. This is the simplest instance of this sort of beauty. For the medium through which we imitate, here, is a natural one; sounds represented by other sounds; and between ideas of the same sense, it is easy to form a connexion. No very great art is required in a poet, when he is describing sweet and soft sounds, to make use of such words as have most liquids and vowels, and glide the softest; or, when he is describing harsh sounds, to throw together a number of harsh syllables which are of difficult pronunciation. Here the common structure of language assists him; for, it will be found that, in most languages, the names of many particular sounds are so formed, as to carry some affinity to the sound which they signify; as with us, the *whistling* of winds, the *buzz* and *hum* of insects, the *hiss* of serpents, the *crash* of falling timber; and many other instances, where the word has been plainly framed upon the sound it represents. I shall produce a remarkable example of this beauty from Milton, taken from two passages in Paradise Lost, describing the sound made, in the one, by the opening of the gates of hell; in the other, by the opening of those of heaven. The contrast between the two, displays, to great advantage, the poet's art. The first is the opening of hell's gates:

> On a sudden, open fly,
> With impetuous recoil, and jarring sound
> Th' infernal doors; and on their hinges grate
> Harsh thunder—— B. i.

Observe, now, the smoothness of the other:

> ———— Heaven open'd wide
> Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound,
> On golden hinges turning.—— B. ii.

The following beautiful passage from Tasso's Gierusalemme, has been often admired, on account of the imitation effected by sound of the thing represented:

> Chiama gli habitator del l'ombre eterne
> Il rauco suon de la Tartarea tromba:
> Treman le spaziose atre caverne,
> E l'aer cieco a quel rumor rimbomba;
> Ne stridendo cosi del le superne
> Regioni del cielo, il folgor piomba;
> Ne si scossa giammai la terra,
> Quand i vapori in sen gravida serra.—CANT. iv. stanz. 4.

The second class of objects, which the sound of words is often employed to imitate, is, motion; as it is swift or slow, violent or gentle, equable or interrupted, easy or accompanied with effort. Though there be no natural affinity between sound, of any kind, and motion, yet, in the imagination, there is a strong one; as appears from the connexion between music and dancing. And therefore, here it is in the poet's power to give us a lively idea of the

kind of motion he would describe, by means of sounds which correspond, in our imagination, with that motion. Long syllables naturally give the impression of slow emotion;* as in this line of Virgil:

Olli inter sese magnâ vi brachia tollunt.

A succession of short syllables presents quick motion to the mind; as,

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.

Both Homer and Virgil are great masters of this beauty, and their works abound with instances of it; most of them, indeed, so often quoted and so well known that it is needless to produce them. I shall give one instance, in English, which seems happy. It is the description of a sudden calm on the seas, in a poem entitled, *The Fleece.*

——— With easy course
The vessels glide; unless their speed be stopp'd
By dead calms, that oft lie on these smooth seas
When every zephyr sleeps; then the shrouds drop;
The downy feather on the cordage hung
Moves not; the flat sea shines like yellow gold
Fused in the fire, or like the marble floor
Of some old temple wide.——

The third set of objects, which I mentioned the sound of words as capable of representing, consists of the passions and emotions of the mind. Sound may, at first view, appear foreign to these; but, that here, also, there is some sort of connexion, is sufficiently proved by the power which music has to awaken, or to assist certain passions, and, according as its strain is varied, to introduce one train of ideas, rather than another. This indeed, logically speaking, cannot be called a resemblance between the sense and the sound, seeing long or short syllables have no natural resemblance to any thought or passion. But if the arrangement of syllables, by their sound alone, recall one set of ideas more readily than another, and dispose the mind for entering into that affection which the poet means to raise, such arrangement may, justly enough, be said to resemble the sense, or be similar and correspondent to it. I admit, that, in many instances, which are supposed to display this beauty of accommodation of sound to the sense, there is much room for imagination to work; and, according as a reader is struck by a passage, he will often fancy a resemblance between the sound and the sense, which others cannot discover. He modulates the numbers to his own disposition of mind; and, in effect, makes the music which he imagines himself to hear. However, that there are real instances of this kind, and that poetry is capable of some such expression, cannot be doubted. Dryden's Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, affords a very beautiful

exemplification of it, in the English language. Without much study or reflection, a poet describing pleasure, joy, and agreeable objects, from the feeling of his subject, naturally runs into smooth, liquid, and flowing numbers:

> ——— Namque ipsa decoram
> Cæsariem nato genitrix, lumenque juventæ
> Purpureum, et lætos oculis afflârat honores. ÆN.

Or,

> Devenêre locos lætos et amæna vireta,
> Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas
> Largior hic campos æther, et lumine vestit
> Purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera nôrant.—ÆN. vi.

Brisk and lively sensations exact quicker and more animated numbers:

> ——— Juvenum manus emicat ardens
> Littus in Hesperium. ÆN. vii.

Melancholy and gloomy subjects naturally express themselves in slow measures, and long words:

> In those deep solitudes and awful cells,
> Where heavenly-pensive Contemplation dwells.

> Et caligantem nigrâ formidine lucum.

I have now given sufficient openings into this subject: a moderate acquaintance with the good poets, either ancient or modern, will suggest many instances of the same kind. And with this, I finish the discussion of the structure of sentences; having fully considered them under all the heads I mentioned; of perspicuity, unity, strength, and musical arrangement.

LECTURE XIV.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

HAVING now finished what related to the construction of sentences, I proceed to other rules concerning style. My general division of the qualities of style, was into perspicuity and ornament. Perspicuity, both in single words and in sentences, I have considered. Ornament, as far as it arises from a graceful, strong, or melodious construction of words, has also been treated of. Another, and a great branch of the ornament of style, is, figurative language; which is now to be the subject of our consideration, and will require a full discussion.

Our first inquiry must be, what is meant by Figures of Speech?*

* On the subject of figures of speech, all the writers who treat of rhetoric or composition, have insisted largely. To make references, therefore, on this subject, were end-

In general, they always imply some departure from simplicity of expression; the idea which we intend to convey, not only enunciated to others, but enunciated in a particular manner, and with some circumstance added which is designed to render the impression more strong and vivid. When I say, for instance, 'That a good man enjoys comfort in the midst of adversity;' I just express my thought in the simplest manner possible. But when I say, 'To the upright there ariseth light in darkness;' the same sentiment is expressed in a figurative style; a new circumstance is introduced; light is put in the place of comfort, and darkness is used to suggest the idea of adversity. In the same manner to say, 'It is impossible, by any search we can make, to explore the divine nature fully,' is to make a simple proposition. But when we say, 'Canst thou, by searching, find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?' This introduces a figure into style; the proposition being not only expressed, but admiration and astonishment being expressed together with it.

But, though figures imply a deviation from what may be reckoned the most simple form of speech, we are not thence to conclude, that they imply any thing uncommon or unnatural. This is so far from being the case, that on very many occasions, they are both the most natural, and the most common method of uttering our sentiments. It is impossible to compose any discourse without using them often; nay, there are few sentences of any length, in which some expression or other, that may be termed a figure, does not occur. From what causes this happens, shall be afterward explained. The fact, in the mean time, shews that they are to be accounted part of that language which nature dictates to men. They are not the inventions of the schools, nor the mere product of study: on the contrary, the most illiterate speak in figures, as often as the most learned. Whenever the imaginations of the vulgar are much awakened, or their passions inflamed against one another, they will pour forth a torrent of figurative language, as forcibly as could be employed by the most artificial declaimer.

What then is it, which has drawn the attention of critics and rhetoricians so much to these forms of speech? It is this: They remarked, that in them consists much of the beauty and the force of language; and found them always to bear some characters, or

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less. On the foundations of figurative language, in general, one of the most sensible and instructive writers appears to me to be M. Marsais, in his *Traité des Tropes pour servir d' Introduction à la Rhetorique, et à la Logique.* For observations on particular figures, the *Elements of Criticism* may be consulted, where the subject is fully handled, and illustrated by a great variety of examples.

distinguishing marks, by the help of which they could reduce them under separate classes and heads. To this, perhaps, they owe their name of figures. As the figure or shape of one body distinguishes it from another, so these forms of speech have, each of them, a cast or turn peculiar to itself, which both distinguishes it from the rest, and distinguishes it from simple expression. Simple expression just makes our idea known to others; but figurative language, over and above, bestows a particular dress upon that idea; a dress which both makes it to be remarked, and adorns it. Hence, this sort of language became early a capital object of attention to those who studied the powers of speech.

Figures, in general, may be described to be that language, which is prompted either by the imagination, or by the passions. The justness of this description will appear, from the more particular account I am afterward to give of them. Rhetoricians commonly divide them into two great classes; figures of words, and figures of thought. The former, figures of words, are commonly called tropes, and consist in a word's being employed to signify something that is different from its original and primitive meaning; so that if you alter the word, you destroy the figure. Thus, in the instance I gave before; 'Light ariseth to the upright in darkness.' The trope consists in 'light and darkness,' being not meant literally, but substituted for comfort and adversity, on account of some resemblance or analogy which they are supposed to bear to these conditions of life. The other class, termed figures of thought, supposes the words to be used in their proper and literal meaning, and the figure to consist in the turn of the thought; as is the case in exclamations, interrogations, apostrophes, and comparisons; where, though you vary the words that are used, or translate them from one language into another, you may, nevertheless, still preserve the same figure in the thought. This distinction, however, is of no great use; as nothing can be built upon it in practice; neither is it always very clear. It is of little importance, whether we give to some particular mode of expression the name of a trope, or of a figure; provided we remember, that figurative language always imports some colouring of the imagination, or some emotion of passion, expressed in our style. And, perhaps, figures of imagination, and figures of passion, might be a more useful distribution of the subject. But, without insisting on any artificial divisions, it will be more useful, that I inquire into the origin and the nature of figures. Only, before I proceed to this, there are two general observations which it may be proper to premise.

The first is, concerning the use of rules with respect to figurative language. I admit, that persons may both speak and write with propriety who know not the names of any of the figures of speech, nor ever studied any rules relating to them. Nature, as

was before observed, dictates the use of figures; and like Mons. Jourdain, in Moliere, who had spoken for forty years in prose, without ever knowing it, many a one uses metaphorical expressions for good purpose, without any idea of what a metaphor is. It will not, however, follow thence, that rules are of no service. All science arises from observations on practice. Practice has always gone before method and rule; but method and rule have afterward improved and perfected practice, in every art. We every day meet with persons who sing agreeably, without knowing one note of the gamut. Yet it has been found of importance to reduce these notes to a scale, and to form an art of music; and it would be ridiculous to pretend, that the art is of no advantage, because the practice is founded in nature. Propriety and beauty of speech are certainly as improveable as the ear or the voice; and to know the principles of this beauty, or the reasons which render one figure, or one manner of speech, preferable to another, cannot fail to assist and direct a proper choice.

But I must observe, in the next place, that although this part of style merits attention, and is a very proper object of science and rule; although much of the beauty of composition depends on figurative language; yet we must beware of imagining that it depends solely, or even chiefly, upon such language. It is not so. The great place which the doctrine of tropes and figures has occupied in systems of rhetoric; the over-anxious care which has been shewn in giving names to a vast variety of them, and in ranging them under different classes, has often led persons to imagine, that if their composition was well-bespangled with a number of these ornaments of speech, it wanted no other beauty; whence has arisen much stiffness and affectation. For it is, in truth, the sentiment or passion, which lies under the figured expression, that gives it any merit. The figure is only the dress; the sentiment is the body and the substance. No figures will render a cold or an empty composition interesting; whereas, if a sentiment be sublime or pathetic, it can support itself perfectly well without any borrowed assistance. Hence, several of the most affecting and admired passages of the best authors, are expressed in the simplest language. The following sentence from Virgil, for instance, makes its way at once to the heart, without the help of any figure whatever. He is describing an Argive, who falls in battle in Italy, at a great distance from his native country.

> Sternitur, infelix, alieno vulnere, cœlumque
> Aspicit, et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.*—Æn. x. 781.

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* Anthares had from Argos travell'd far,
Alcides' friend, and brother of the war;
Now falling, by another's wound, his eyes
He casts to heaven, on Argos thinks, and dies.

A single stroke of this kind, drawn as by the very pencil of nature, is worth a thousand figures. In the same manner, the simple style of Scripture: 'He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.'—'God said, Let there be light; and there was light;' imparts a lofty conception to much greater advantage, than if it had been decorated by the most pompous metaphors. The fact is, that the strong pathetic, and the pure sublime, not only have little dependance on figures of speech, but, generally, reject them. The proper region of these ornaments is, where a moderate degree of elevation and passion is predominant; and there they contribute to the embellishment of discourse, only when there is a basis of solid thought and natural sentiment; when they are inserted in their proper place; and when they rise, of themselves, from the subject, without being sought after.

Having premised these observations, I proceed to give an account of the origin and nature of figures; principally of such as have their dependance on language; including that numerous tribe, which the rhetoricians call tropes.

At the first rise of language, men would begin with giving names to the different objects which they discerned or thought of. This nomenclature would, at the beginning, be very narrow. According as men's ideas multiplied, and their acquaintance with objects increased, their stock of names and words would increase also. But to the infinite variety of objects and ideas, no language is adequate. No language is so copious, as to have a separate word for every separate idea. Men naturally sought to abridge this labour of multiplying words *in infinitum;* and in order to lay less

In this translation much of the beauty of the original is lost. 'On Argos thinks, and dies,' is by no means equal to 'dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos:' 'As he dies, he remembers his beloved Argos.' It is indeed observable, that in most of those tender and pathetic passages, which do so much honour to Virgil, that great poet expresses himself with the utmost simplicity; as,

> Te, dulcis Conjux, te solo in littore secum,
> Te veniente die, te decedente canebat.—GEORG. iv.

And so in that moving prayer of Evander, upon his parting with his son Pallas:

> At vos, O Superi! et Divûm tu maxime rector
> Jupiter, Arcadii quæso miserescite regis,
> Et patrias audite preces. Si numina vestra
> Incolumem Pallanta mihi, si fata reservant,
> Si visurus eum vivo, et venturus in unum,
> Vitam oro; patiar quemvis durare laborem!
> Sin aliquem infandum casum, Fortuna, minaris,
> Nunc, O nunc liceat crudelem abrumpere vitam!
> Dum curæ ambiguæ, dum spes incerta futuri;
> Dum te, chare Puer! mea sera et sola voluptas!
> Amplexu teneo; gravior ne nuncius aures
> Vulneret —— ÆN. vii. 572.

burden on their memories, made one word, which they had already appropriated to a certain idea or object, stand also for some other idea or object, between which and the primary one, they found, or fancied, some relation. Thus the preposition, *in*, was originally invented to express the circumstance of place: 'The man was killed *in* the wood.' In progress of time, words were wanted to express men's being connected with certain conditions of fortune, or certain situations of mind, and some resemblance or analogy being fancied between these, and the place of bodies, the word, *in*, was employed to express men's being so circumstanced; as, one's being *in* health, or *in* sickness, *in* prosperity, or *in* adversity, *in* joy, or *in* grief, *in* doubt, or *in* danger, or *in* safety. Here we see this preposition, *in*, plainly assuming a tropical signification, or carried off from its original meaning, to signify something else which relates to, or resembles it.

Tropes of this kind abound in all languages; and are plainly owing to the want of proper words. The operations of the mind and affections, in particular, are, in most languages, described by words taken from sensible objects. The reason is plain. The names of sensible objects were, in all languages, the words most early introduced; and were, by degrees, extended to those mental objects of which men had more obscure conceptions, and to which they found it more difficult to assign distinct names. They borrowed, therefore, the name of some sensible idea, where their imagination found some affinity. Thus we speak of a *piercing* judgment, and a *clear* head; a *soft* or a *hard* heart; a *rough* or a *smooth* behaviour. We say, *inflamed* by anger, *warmed* by love, *swelled* with pride, *melted* into grief: and these are almost the only significant words which we have for such ideas.

But, although the barrenness of language, and the want of words, be doubtless one cause of the invention of tropes; yet it is not the only, nor, perhaps, even the principal, source of this form of speech. Tropes have arisen more frequently, and spread themselves wider, from the influence which imagination possesses over language. The train on which this has proceeded among all nations, I shall endeavour to explain.

Every object which makes any impression on the human mind, is constantly accompanied with certain circumstances and relations, that strike us at the same time. It never presents itself to our view 'isolé,' as the French express it; that is, independent on, and separated from, every other thing, but always occurs as somehow related to other objects; going before them, or following them; their effect, or their cause; resembling them, or opposed to them; distinguished by certain qualities, or surrounded with certain circumstances. By this means, every idea or object carries in its train some other ideas which may be considered as its accessories. These accessories

often strike the imagination more than the principal idea itself. They are, perhaps, more agreeable ideas, or they are more familiar to our conceptions; or they recall to our memory a greater variety of important circumstances. The imagination is more disposed to rest upon some of them; and therefore, instead of using the proper name of the principal idea which it means to express, it employs, in its place, the name of the accessory or correspondent idea; although the principal have a proper and well-known name of its own. Hence, a vast variety of tropical or figurative words obtain currency in all languages, through choice not necessity; and men of lively imaginations are every day adding to their number.

Thus, when we design to intimate the period at which a state enjoyed most reputation or glory, it were easy to employ the proper words for expressing this; but as this is readily connected, in our imagination, with the flourishing period of a plant or a tree, we lay hold of this correspondent idea, and say, 'The Roman empire flourished most under Augustus.' The leader of a faction, is plain language; but because the head is the principal part of the human body, and is supposed to direct all the animal operations, resting upon this resemblance, we say, 'Catiline was the head of the party.' The word *Voice*, was originally invented to signify the articulate sound, formed by the organs of the mouth; but, as by means of it men signify their ideas and their intentions to each other, *voice* soon assumed a great many other meanings, all derived from this primary effect. 'To give our *voice*' for any thing, signified, to give our sentiment in favour of it. Not only so; but *voice* was transferred to signify any intimation of will or judgment, though given without the least interposition of voice in its literal sense, or any sound uttered at all. Thus, we speak of listening to the *voice* of conscience, the *voice* of nature, the *voice* of God. This usage takes place, not so much from barrenness of language, or want of a proper word, as from an allusion which we choose to make to *voice*, in its primary sense, in order to convey our idea, connected with a circumstance which appears to the fancy to give it more sprightliness and force

The account which I have now given, and which seems to be a full and fair one, of the introduction of tropes into all languages, coincides with what Cicero briefly hints, in his third book de Oratore. 'Modus transferendi verba latè patet; quam necessitas primum genuit, coacta inopiâ et angustiis: post autem delectatio, jucunditasque celebravit. Nam ut vestis, frigoris depellendi causâ reperta primo, post adhiberi cæpta est ad ornatum etiam corporis et dignitatem, sic verbi translatio instituta est inopiæ causâ, frequentata, delectationis.'*

* 'The figurative usage of words is very extensive; and usage to which necessity first gave rise, on account of the paucity of words, and barrenness of language; but

From what has been said it clearly appears, how that must come to pass, which I had occasion to mention in a former Lecture, that all languages are most figurative in their early state Both the causes to which I ascribe the origin of figures, concur in producing this effect at the beginnings of society. Language is then most barren; the stock of proper names which have been invented for things, is small; and at the same time, imagination exerts great influence over the conceptions of men, and their method of uttering them; so that both from necessity and from choice, their speech will, at that period, abound in tropes. For the savage tribes of men are always much given to wonder and astonishment. Every new object surprises, terrifies, and makes a strong impression on their mind; they are governed by imagination and passion more than by reason; and, of course, their speech must be deeply tinctured by their genius. In fact, we find, that this is the character of the American and Indian languages; bold, picturesque, and metaphorical; full of strong allusions to sensible qualities, and to such objects as struck them most in their wild and solitary life. An Indian chief makes a harangue to his tribe, in a style full of stronger metaphors than a European would use in an epic poem.

As language makes gradual progress towards refinement, almost every object comes to have a proper name given to it, and perspicuity and precision are more studied. But, still, for the reasons before given, borrowed words, or, as rhetoricians call them, tropes, must continue to occupy a considerable place. In every language, too, there are a multitude of words, which, though they were figurative in their first application to certain objects, yet, by long use, lose that figurative power wholly, and come to be considered as simple and literal expressions. In this case, are the terms which I remarked before, as transferred from sensible qualities, to the operations or qualities of the mind, a *piercing* judgment, a *clear* head, a *hard* heart, and the like. There are other words which remain in a sort of middle state; which have neither lost wholly their figurative application, not yet retain so much of it, as to imprint any remarkable character of figured language on our style; such as these phrases, 'apprehend one's meaning;' 'enter on a subject;' 'follow up an argument;' 'stir up strife;' and a great many more, of which our language is full. In the use of such phrases, correct writers will always preserve a regard to the figure or allusion on which they are founded, and will be careful not to apply them in any way that is inconsistent with it. One may be 'sheltered under

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which the pleasure that was found in it afterward rendered frequent. For, as garments were first contrived to defend our bodies from the cold, and afterward were employed for the purpose of ornament and dignity, so figures of speech, introduced by want, were cultivated for the sake of entertainment.'

the patronage of a great man;' but it were wrong to say, 'sheltered under the mask of dissimulation;' as a mask conceals, but does not shelter. An object, in description, may be 'clothed,' if you will, 'with epithets;' but it is not so proper to speak of its being 'clothed with circumstances;' as the word 'circumstances' alludes to standing round, not to clothing. Such attentions as these, to the propriety of language, are requisite in every composition.

What has been said on this subject, tends to throw light on the nature of language in general; and will lead to the reasons, Why tropes or figures contribute to the beauty and grace of style.

First, they enrich language, and render it more copious. By their means, words and phrases are multiplied for expressing all sorts of ideas; for describing even the minutest differences; the nicest shades and colours of thought; which no language could possibly do by proper words alone, without assistance from tropes.

Secondly, they bestow dignity upon style. The familiarity of common words, to which our ears are much accustomed, tends to degrade style. When we want to adapt our language to the tone of an elevated subject, we should be greatly at a loss, if we could not borrow assistance from figures; which, properly employed, have a similar effect on language, with what is produced by the rich and splendid dress of a person of rank; to create respect, and to give an air of magnificence to him who wears it. Assistance of this kind is often needed in prose compositions; but poetry could not subsist without it. Hence, figures form the constant language of poetry. To say, that 'the sun rises,' is trite and common; but it becomes a magnificent image when expressed, as Mr. Thomson has done:

> But yonder comes the powerful king of day,
> Rejoicing in the east.——

To say, that 'all men are subject alike to death,' presents only a vulgar idea; but it rises and fills the imagination, when painted thus by Horace:

> Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede, pauperum tabernas
> Regumque turres.

Or,

> Omnes eodem cogimur; omnium,
> Versatur urnâ, serius, ocyus,
> Sors exitura, et nos in eternum
> Exilium impositura cymbæ.*

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* With equal pace impartial fate
Knocks at the palace, as the cottage gate.

Or,

We all must tread the paths of fate;
And ever shakes the mortal urn,
Whose lot embarks us, soon or late,
On Charon's boat; ah! never to return.---FRANCIS.

In the third place, figures give us the pleasure of enjoying two objects presented together to our view, without confusion; the principal idea, which is the subject of the discourse, along with its accessory, which gives it the figurative dress. We see one thing in another, as Aristotle expresses it; which is always agreeable to the mind. For there is nothing with which the fancy is more delighted, than with comparisons, and resemblances of objects; and all tropes are founded upon some relation or analogy between one thing and another. When, for instance, in place of 'youth,' I say, the 'morning of life;' the fancy is immediately entertained with all the resembling circumstances which presently occur between these two objects. At one moment, I have in my eye a certain period of human life, and a certain time of the day, so related to each other, that the imagination plays between them with pleasure, and contemplates two similar objects in one view, without embarrassment or confusion. Not only so, but,

In the fourth place, Figures are attended with this farther advantage, of giving us frequently a much clearer and more striking view of the principal object, than we could have if it were expressed in simple terms, and divested of its accessory idea. This is, indeed, their principal advantage, in virtue of which, they are very properly said to illustrate a subject, or to throw light upon it. For they exhibit the object, on which they are employed, in a picturesque form; they can render an abstract conception, in some degree, an object of sense; they surround it with such circumstances as enable the mind to lay hold of it steadily, and to contemplate it fully. 'Those persons,' says one, 'who gain the hearts of most people, who are chosen as the companions of their softer hours, and their reliefs from anxiety and care, are seldom persons of shining qualities, or strong virtues: it is rather the soft green of the soul on which we rest our eyes, that are fatigued with beholding more glaring objects.' Here, by a happy allusion to a colour, the whole conception is conveyed clear and strong to the mind in one word. By a well-chosen figure, even conviction is assisted, and the impression of a truth upon the mind made more lively and forcible than it would otherwise be. As in the following illustration of Dr. Young's: 'When we dip too deep in pleasure, we always stir a sediment that renders it impure and noxious:' or in this, 'A heart boiling with violent passions, will always send up infatuating fumes to the head.' An image that presents so much congruity between a moral and a sensible idea, serves like an argument from analogy, to enforce what the author asserts, and to induce belief.

Besides, whether we are endeavouring to raise sentiments of pleasure or aversion, we can always heighten the emotion by the figures which we introduce; leading the imagination to a train,

either of agreeable or disagreeable, of exalting or debasing ideas, correspondent to the impression which we seek to make. When we want to render an object beautiful or magnificent, we borrow images from all the most beautiful or splendid scenes of nature; we thereby naturally throw a lustre over our object; we enliven the reader's mind, and dispose him to go along with us, in the gay and pleasing impressions which we give him of the subject. This effect of figures is happily touched in the following lines of Dr. Akenside, and illustrated by a very sublime figure:

——— Then the inexpressive strain
Diffuses its enchantment. Fancy dreams
Of sacred fountains and Elysian groves,
And vales of bliss, the intellectual Power
Bends from his awful throne a wond'ring ear,
And smiles.———

Pleasures of Imagination, i. 124.

What I have now explained, concerning the use and effects of figures, naturally leads us to reflect on the wonderful power of language; and indeed, we cannot reflect on it without the highest admiration. What a fine vehicle is it now become for all the conceptions of the human mind; even for the most subtile and delicate workings of the imagination! What a pliant and flexible instrument in the hand of one who can employ it skilfully; prepared to take every form which he chooses to give it! Not content with a simple communication of ideas and thoughts, it paints those ideas to the eye; it gives colouring and relievo, even to the most abstract conceptions. In the figures which it uses, it sets mirrors before us, where we may behold objects, a second time, in their likeness. It entertains us, as with a succession of the most splendid pictures; disposes, in the most artificial manner, of the light and shade, for viewing every thing to the best advantage; in fine, from being a rude and imperfect interpreter of men's wants and necessities, it has now passed into an instrument of the most delicate and refined luxury.

To make these effects of figurative language sensible, there are few authors in the English language whom I can refer to with more advantage than Mr. Addison, whose imagination is, at once, remarkably rich, and remarkably correct and chaste. When he is treating, for instance, of the effect which light and colours have to entertain the fancy, considered in Mr. Locke's view of them as secondary qualities, which have no real existence in matter, but are only ideas of the mind, with what beautiful painting has he adorned this philosophic speculation! 'Things,' says he, 'would make but a poor appearance to the eye, if we saw them only in their proper figures and motions. Now, we are every where entertained

with pleasing shows and apparitions; we discover imaginary glories in the heavens, and in the earth, and see some of this visionary beauty poured out upon the whole creation. But what a rough unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, and the several distinctions of light and shade vanish? In short, our souls are, at present, delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion, and we walk about like the enchanted hero of a romance, who sees beautiful castles, woods, and meadows; and at the same time hears the warbling of birds, and the purling of streams; but upon the finishing of some secret spell, the fantastic scene breaks up, and the disconsolate knight finds himself on a barren heath, or in a solitary desert. It is not improbable that something like this may be the state of the soul after its first separation, in respect of the images it will receive from matter.' No. 413. Spec.

Having thus explained, at sufficient length, the origin, the nature, and the effects of tropes, I should proceed next to the several kinds and divisions of them. But, in treating of these, were I to follow the common tract of the scholastic writers on rhetoric, I should soon become tedious, and, I apprehend, useless, at the same time. Their great business has been, with a most patient and frivolous industry, to branch them out under a vast number of divisions, according to all the several modes in which a word may be carried from its literal meaning, into one that is figurative, without doing any more; as if the mere knowledge of the names and classes of all the tropes that can be formed, could be of any advantage towards the proper or graceful use of language. All that I purpose is, to give, in a few words, before finishing this Lecture, a general view of the several sources whence the tropical meaning of words is derived; after which I shall, in subsequent Lectures, descend to a more particular consideration of some of the most considerable figures of speech, and such as are in most frequent use; by treating of which I shall give all the instruction I can concerning the proper employment of figurative language, and point out the errors and abuses which are apt to be committed in this part of style.

All tropes, as I before observed, are founded on the relation which one object bears to another; in virtue of which, the name of the one can be substituted instead of the name of the other; and by such a substitution, the vivacity of the idea is commonly meant to be increased. These relations, some more, some less intimate, may all give rise to tropes. One of the first and most obvious relations is, that between a cause and its effect. Hence, in figurative language, the cause is sometimes put for the effect. Thus, Mr. Addison, writing of Italy,

Blossoms, and fruits, and flowers, together rise,
And the whole year in gay confusion lies:

where the 'whole year' is plainly intended to signify the effects or productions of all the seasons of the year. At other times, again, the effect is put for the cause: as 'gray hairs' frequently for old age, which causes gray hairs; and 'shade,' for trees that produce the shade. The relation between the container and the thing contained, is also so intimate and obvious, as naturally to give rise to tropes:

——— Ille impiger hausit
Spumantem pateram et pleno se proluit auro.

Where every one sees, that the cup and the gold are put for the liquor that was contained in the golden cup. In the same manner, the name of any country is often used to denote the inhabitants of that country; and Heaven, very commonly employed to signify God, because he is conceived as dwelling in heaven. To implore the assistance of Heaven is the same as to implore the assistance of God. The relation betwixt any established sign and the thing signified, is a farther source of tropes. Hence,

Cedant arma togæ; concedat laurea linguæ.

The 'toga' being the badge of the civil professions, and the 'laurel,' of military honours, the badge of each is put for the civil and military characters themselves. To 'assume the sceptre,' is a common phrase for entering on royal authority. To tropes, founded on these several relations, of cause and effect, container and contained, sign and thing signified, is given the name of Metonymy.

When the trope is founded on the relation between an antecedent and a consequent, or what goes before, and immediately follows, it is then called a Metalepsis; as in the Roman phrase of 'Fuit,' or 'Vixit,' to express that one was dead. 'Fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Dardanidum,' signifies, that the glory of Troy is now no more.

When the whole is put for a part, or a part for the whole; a genus for a species, or a species for a genus; the singular for the plural, or the plural for the singular number; in general, when any thing less or any thing more, is put for the precise object meant; the figure is then called a Synecdoche. It is very common, for instance, to describe a whole object by some remarkable part of it: as, when we say, 'a fleet of so many sail,' in the place of 'ships;' when we use the 'head' for the 'person,' the 'pole' for the 'earth,' the 'waves' for the 'sea.' In like manner an attribute may be put for a subject; as 'youth and beauty,' for 'the young and beautiful;' and sometimes a subject for its attribute. But it is needless to insist longer on this enumeration, which serves little purpose.

I have said enough to give an opening into that great variety of relations between objects, by means of which the mind is assisted to pass easily from one to another; and by the name of the one understands the other to be meant. It is always some accessory idea, which recalls the principal to the imagination; and commonly recalls it with more force, than if the principal idea had been expressed.

The relation which is far the most fruitful of tropes, I have not yet mentioned; that is, the relation of similitude and resemblance. On this is founded what is called the Metaphor: when, in place of using the proper name of any object, we employ, in its place, the name of some other which is like it; which is a sort of picture of it, and which thereby awakens the conception of it, with more force or grace. This figure is more frequent than all the rest put together; and the language, both of prose and verse owes to it much of its elegance and grace. This, therefore, deserves very full and particular consideration; and shall be the subject of the next Lecture.

LECTURE XV.

METAPHOR.

After the preliminary observations I have made relating to figurative language in general, I come now to treat separately of such figures of speech as occur most frequently, and require particular attention: and I begin with Metaphor. This is a figure founded entirely on the resemblance which one object bears to another. Hence, it is much allied to simile, or comparison; and is indeed no other than a comparison, expressed in an abridged form. When I say of some great minister, 'that he upholds the state, like a pillar which supports the weight of a whole edifice,' I fairly make a comparison; but when I say of such a minister, 'that he is the pillar of the state,' it is now become a metaphor. The comparison betwixt the minister and a pillar, is made in the mind; but is expressed without any of the words that denote comparison. The comparison is only insinuated, not expressed: the one object is supposed to be so like the other, that, without formally drawing the comparison, the name of the one may be put in the place of the name of the other. 'The minister is the pillar of the state.' This, therefore, is a more lively and animated manner of expressing the resemblances which imagination traces among objects. There is nothing which delights the fancy more than this act of comparing things together, discovering resemblances between them, and describing them by their likeness. The mind thus employed, is exer-

cised without being fatigued; and is gratified with the consciousness of its own ingenuity. We need not be surprised, therefore, at finding all language tinctured strongly with metaphor. It insinuates itself even into familiar conversation; and, unsought, rises up of its own accord in the mind. The very words which I have casually employed in describing this, are a proof of what I say; *tinctured, insinuates, rises up*, are all of them metaphorical expressions, borrowed from some resemblance which fancy forms between sensible objects and the internal operations of the mind; and yet the terms are no less clear, and, perhaps, more expressive, than if words had been used, which were to be taken in the strict and literal sense.

Though all metaphor imports comparison, and, therefore, is, in that respect, a figure of thought; yet, as the words in a metaphor are not taken literally, but changed from their proper to a figurative sense, the metaphor is commonly ranked among tropes or figures of words. But, provided the nature of it be well understood, it signifies very little whether we call it a figure or a trope. I have confined it to the expression of resemblance between two objects. I must remark, however, that the word metaphor is sometimes used in a looser and more extended sense; for the application of a term in any figurative signification, whether the figure be founded on resemblance, or on some other relation which two objects bear to one another. For instance; when gray hairs are put for old age, as, 'to bring one's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave;' some writers would call this a metaphor, though it is not properly one, but what rhetoricians call a metonymy; that is, the effect put for the cause; 'gray hairs' being the effect of old age, but not bearing any sort of resemblance to it. Aristotle, in his Poetics, uses metaphor in this extended sense, for any figurative meaning imposed upon a word; as a whole put for the part, or a part for the whole; a species for the genus, or a genus for the species. But it would be unjust to tax this most acute writer with any inaccuracy on this account; the minute subdivisions, and various names of tropes, being unknown in his days, and the invention of later rhetoricians. Now, however, when these divisions are established, it is inaccurate to call every figurative use of terms promiscuously a metaphor.

Of all the figures of speech, none comes so near to painting as metaphor. Its peculiar effect is to give light and strength to description; to make intellectual ideas, in some sort, visible to the eye, by giving them colour, and substance, and sensible qualities. In order to produce this effect, however, a delicate hand is required; for, by a very little inaccuracy, we are in hazard of introducing confusion, in place of promoting perspicuity. Several rules, therefore, are necessary to be given for the proper management of metaphor. But, before entering on these, I shall give one

instance of a very beautiful metaphor, that I may shew the figure to full advantage. I shall take my instance from Lord Bolingbroke's Remarks on the History of England. Just at the conclusion of his work, he is speaking of the behaviour of Charles I. to his last parliament: "In a word," says he, 'about a month after their meeting, he dissolved them; and, as soon as he had dissolved them, he repented; but he repented too late of his rashness. Well might he repent, for the vessel was now full, and this last drop made the waters of bitterness overflow.' 'Here,' he adds, 'we draw the curtain, and put an end to our remarks.' Nothing could be more happily thrown off. The metaphor, we see, is continued through several expressions. The *vessel* is put for the state or temper of the nation already *full*, that is, provoked to the highest by former oppressions and wrongs; this *last drop*, stands for the provocation recently received by the abrupt dissolution of the parliament; and the *overflowing of the waters of bitterness*, beautifully expresses all the effects of resentment let loose by an exasperated people.

On this passage we may make two remarks in passing. The one, that nothing forms a more spirited and dignified conclusion of a subject, than a figure of this kind happily placed at the close. We see the effect of it in this instance. The author goes off with a good grace; and leaves a strong and full impression of his subject on the reader's mind. My other remark is, the advantage which a metaphor frequently has above a formal comparison. How much would the sentiment here have been enfeebled, if it had been expressed in the style of a regular simile, thus: 'Well might he repent; for the state of the nation, loaded with grievances and provocation, resembled a vessel that was now full, and this superadded provocation, like the last drop infused, made their rage and resentment, as waters of bitterness, overflow.' It has infinitely more spirit and force as it now stands, in the form of a metaphor. 'Well might he repent; for the vessel was now full; and this last drop made the waters of bitterness overflow.'

Having mentioned, with applause, this instance from Lord Bolingbroke, I think it incumbent on me here to take notice, that though I may have recourse to this author, sometimes, for examples of style, it is his style only, and not his sentiments, that deserve praise. It is, indeed, my opinion, that there are few writings in the English language, which, for the matter contained in them, can be read with less profit or fruit than Lord Bolingbroke's works. His political writings have the merit of a very lively and eloquent style; but they have no other; being, as to the substance, the mere temporary productions of faction and party; no better, indeed, than pamphlets written for the day. His Posthumous, or, as they are called, his Philosophical Works, wherein he attacks religion,

have still less merit; for they are as loose in the style as they are flimsy in the reasoning. An unhappy instance, this author is, of parts and genius so miserably perverted by faction and passion, that as his memory will descend to posterity with little honour, so his productions will soon pass, and are, indeed, already passing, into neglect and oblivion.

Returning from this digression to the subject before us, I proceed to lay down the rules to be observed in the conduct of metaphors; and which are much the same for tropes of every kind.

The first which I shall mention, is, that they be suited to the nature of the subject of which we treat: neither too many, nor too gay; nor too elevated for it; that we neither attempt to force the subject, by means of them, into a degree of elevation which is not congruous to it; nor, on the other hand, allow it to sink below its proper dignity. This is a direction which belongs to all figurative language, and should be ever kept in view. Some metaphors are allowable, nay, beautiful in poetry, which it would be absurd and unnatural to employ in prose; some may be graceful in orations, which would be very improper in historical or philosophical composition. We must remember that figures are the dress of our sentiments. As there is a natural congruity between dress and the character or rank of the person who wears it, a violation of which congruity never fails to hurt; the same holds precisely as to the application of figures to sentiment. The excessive or unseasonable employment of them is mere foppery in writing. It gives a boyish air to composition; and instead of raising a subject, in fact, diminishes its dignity. For, as in life true dignity must be founded on character, not on dress and appearance, so the dignity of composition must arise from sentiment and thought, not from ornament. The affectation and parade of ornament, detract as much from an author as they do from a man. Figures and metaphors, therefore, should, on no occasion, be stuck on too profusely; and never should be such as refuse to accord with the strain of our sentiment. Nothing can be more unnatural, than for a writer to carry on a strain of reasoning, in the same sort of figurative language which he would use in description. When he reasons, we look only for perspicuity; when he describes, we expect embellishment; when he divides, or relates, we desire plainness and simplicity. One of the greatest secrets in composition is, to know when to be simple. This always gives a heightening to ornament, in its proper place. The right disposition of the shade makes the light and colouring strike the more: 'Is enim est eloquens,' says Cicero, 'qui et humilia subtiliter, et magna graviter, et mediocria temperatè, potest dicere.—Nam qui nihil potest tranquillè, nihil leniter, nihil definite, distinctè, potest dicere, is, cum non præparatis auribus inflammare rem cæpit, furere apud sanos, et

quasi inter sobrios baccnari temulentus videtur.'* This admonition should be particularly attended to by young practitioners in the art of writing, who are apt to be carried away by an undistinguishing admiration of what is showy and florid, whether in its place or not.†

The second rule which I give, respects the choice of objects from whence metaphors, and other figures, are to be drawn. The field for figurative language is very wide. All nature, to speak in the style of figures, opens its stores to us, and admits us to gather, from all sensible objects, whatever can illustrate intellectual or moral ideas. Not only the gay and splendid objects of sense, but the grave, the terrifying, and even the gloomy and dismal, may, on different occasions, be introduced into figures with propriety. But we must beware of ever using such allusions as raise in the mind disagreeable, mean, vulgar, or dirty ideas. Even when metaphors are chosen in order to vilify and degrade any object, an author should study never to be nauseous in his allusions. Cicero blames an orator of his time, for terming his enemy 'Stercus Curiæ;' 'quamvis sit simile,' says he, 'tamen est deformis cogitatio similitudinis.' But in subjects of dignity it is an unpardonable fault to introduce mean and vulgar metaphors. In the treatise on the Art of Sinking, in Dean Swift's works, there is a full and humorous collection of instances of this kind, wherein authors, instead of exalting, have contrived to degrade their subjects by the figures they employed. Authors of greater note than those which are there quoted, have at times fallen into this error. Archbishop Tillotson, for instance, is sometimes negligent in his choice of metaphors; as, when speaking of the day of judgment, he describes the world, as 'cracking about the sinner's ears.' Shakspeare, whose imagination was rich and bold, in a much

* 'He is truly eloquent who can discourse of humble subjects in a plain style, who can treat important ones with dignity, and speak of things which are of a middle nature, in a temperate strain. For one who, upon no occasion, can express himself in a calm, orderly, distinct manner, when he begins to be on fire before his readers are prepared to kindle along with him, has the appearance of raving like a madman among persons who are in their senses, or of reeling like a drunkard, in the midst of sober company.'

† What person of the least taste can bear the following passage in a late historian? He is giving an account of the famous act of parliament against irregular marriages in England: 'The bill,' says he, 'underwent a great number of alterations and amendments, which were not effected without violent contest.' This is plain language suited to the subject; and we naturally expect, that he should go on in the same strain, to tell us, that after these contests, it was carried by a great majority of voices, and obtained the royal assent. But how does he express himself in finishing the period? 'At length, however, it was floated through both houses on the tide of a great majority, and steered into the safe harbour of royal approbation.' Nothing can be more puerile than such language. Smollett's History of England, as quoted in Critical Review for Oct. 1761, p. 251.

greater degree than it was delicate, often fails here. The following, for example, is a gross transgression: in his Henry V., having mentioned a dunghill, he presently raises a metaphor from the steam of it; and on a subject too, that naturally led to much nobler ideas:

> And those that leave their valiant bones in France,
> Dying like men, though buried in your dunghills,
> They shall be famed; for there the sun shall greet them,
> And draw their honours reeking up to heaven.---Act iv. sc. 8.

In the third place, as metaphors should be drawn from objects of some dignity, so particular care should be taken that the resemblance, which is the foundation of the metaphor, be clear and perspicuous, not far-fetched, nor difficult to discover. The transgression of this rule makes, what are called harsh or forced metaphors, which are always displeasing, because they puzzle the reader, and instead of illustrating the thought, render it perplexed and intricate. With metaphors of this kind Cowley abounds. He, and some of the writers of his age, seemed to have considered it as the perfection of wit, to hit upon likenesses between objects which no other person could have discovered; and at the same time, to pursue those metaphors so far, that it requires some ingenuity to follow them out, and comprehend them. This makes a metaphor resemble an enigma; and is the very reverse of Cicero's rule on this head: 'Verecunda debet esse, translatio; ut deducta esse in alienum locum non irruisse, atque ut voluntario non vi venisse videatur.'* How forced and obscure, for instance, are the following verses of Cowley, speaking of his mistress:

> Woe to her stubborn heart, if once mine come
> Into the self-same room,
> 'Twill tear and blow up all within,
> Like a granada, shot into a magazine.
> Then shall love keep the ashes and torn parts
> Of both our broken hearts;
> Shall out of both one new one make;
> From hers th' alloy, from mine the metal take;
> For of her heart, he from the flames will find
> But little left behind:
> Mine only will remain entire,
> No dross was there to perish in the fire.

In this manner he addresses sleep:

> In vain, thou drowsy god, I thee invoke,
> For thou who dost from fumes arise,
> Thou who man's soul dost overshade
> With a thick cloud by vapours made,

* 'Every metaphor should be modest, so that it may carry the appearance of having been led, not of having forced itself, into the place of that word whose room it occupies; that it may seem to have come thither of its own accord, and not by constraint.' De Oratore, lib. iii. c. 53.

Canst have no power to shut his eyes,
Whose flame 's so pure, that it sends up no smoke
Yet how do tears but from some vapours rise,
  Tears that bewinter all my year;
    The fate of Egypt I sustain,
    And never feel the dew of rain,
  From clouds which in the head appear:
  But all my too much moisture owe
To overflowings of the heart below.*

Trite and common resemblances should indeed be avoided in our metaphors. To be new and not vulgar, is a beauty. But when they are fetched from some likeness too remote, and lying too far out of the road of ordinary thought, then, besides their obscurity, they have also the disadvantage of appearing laboured, and, as the French call it, 'recherché:' whereas metaphor, like every other ornament, loses its whole grace, when it does not seem natural and easy.

It is but a bad and ungraceful softening, which writers sometimes use for a harsh metaphor, when they palliate it with the expression, *as it were*. This is but an awkward parenthesis; and metaphors, which need this apology of an *as it were*, would generally have been better omitted. Metaphors, too, borrowed from any of the sciences, especially such of them as belong to particular professions, are almost always faulty by their obscurity.

In the fourth place, it must be carefully attended to, in the conduct of metaphors, never to jumble metaphorical and plain language together; never to construct a period so, that part of it must be understood metaphorically, part literally: which always produces a most disagreeable confusion. Instances which are but too frequent, even in good authors, will make this rule, and the reason of it, be clearly understood. In Mr. Pope's translation of the Odyssey, Penelope, bewailing the abrupt departure of her son Telemachus, is made to speak thus:

Long to my joys my dearest lord is lost,
His country's buckler, and the Grecian boast;
Now from my fond embrace by tempests torn,
Our other column of the state is borne,
Nor took a kind adieu, nor sought consent.†---IV. 962.

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* See an excellent criticism on this sort of metaphysical poetry, in Dr. Johnson's life of Cowley.

† In the original, there is no allusion to a column, and the metaphor is regularly supported:---

Ἡ πριν μεν ποσιν ἐσθλον απώλεσα θυμολεοντα
Παντοιης ἀρετῆσι κεκασμενον ἐν Δαναοισι
Ἐσθλον, τȣ κλεος ἐυρυ καθ' Ἑλλαδα και μεσον Ἀργος·
Νυν δ' αυ παιδ' αγαπητον ανηρειψαντο θυελλαι
Ακλεα ἐκ μεγαρων, ȣδ' ὁρμηθεντος ακȣσα.   Δ. 724.

Here in one line, her son is figured as a column; and in the next, he returns to be a person, to whom it belongs to take adieu, and to ask consent. This is inconsistent. The poet should either have kept himself to the idea of man, in the literal sense; or, if he figured him by a column, he should have ascribed nothing to him but what belonged to it. He was not at liberty to ascribe to that column the actions and properties of a man. Such unnatural mixtures render the image indistinct; leaving it to waver, in our conception, between the figurative and the literal sense. Horace's rule, which he applies to characters, should be observed by all writers who deal in figures:

——— Servetur ad imum,
Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.

Mr. Pope, elsewhere, addressing himself to the king, says,

To thee the world its present homage pays,
The harvest early, but mature the praise.

This, though not so gross, is a fault, however, of the same kind. It is plain, that, had not the rhyme misled him to the choice of an improper phrase, he would have said,

The harvest early, but mature the crop:

And so would have continued the figure which he had begun. Whereas, by dropping it unfinished, and by employing the literal word, *praise*, when we were expecting something that related to the harvest, the figure is broken, and the two members of the sentence have no proper correspondence with each other:

The *harvest* early, but mature the *praise*.

The works of Ossian abound with beautiful and correct metaphors: such as that on a hero: 'In peace, thou art the gale of spring; in war, the mountain storm.' Or this, on a woman: 'She was covered with the light of beauty; but her heart was the house of pride.' They afford, however, one instance of the fault we are now censuring: 'Trothal went forth with the stream of his people, but they met a rock: for Fingal stood unmoved; broken they rolled back from his side: nor did they roll in safety; the spear of the king pursued their flight.' At the beginning, the metaphor is very beautiful. The stream, the unmoved rock, the waves rolling back broken, are expressions employed in the proper and consistent language of figure; but in the end, when we are told, 'they did not roll in safety, because the spear of the king pursued their flight,' the literal meaning is improperly mixed with the metaphor; they are, at one and the same time, presented to us as *waves* that *roll*, and men that may be *pursued* and *wounded with a spear*. If it be faulty to jumble together, in this manner, metaphorical and plain language, it is still more so

In the fifth place, to make two different metaphors meet on one object. This is what is called mixed metaphor, and is indeed one of the grossest abuses of this figure; such as Shakspeare's expression, 'to take arms against a sea of troubles.' This makes a most unnatural medley, and confounds the imagination entirely. Quinctilian has sufficiently guarded us against it. 'Id imprimis est custodiendum, ut quo genere cœperis translationis, hoc finias. Multi autem, cùm initium a tempestate sumserunt, incendio aut ruinâ finiunt; quæ est inconsequentia rerum fœdissima.'* Observe, for instance, what an inconsistent group of objects is brought together by Shakspeare, in the following passage of the Tempest; speaking of persons recovering their judgment after the enchantment, which held them, was dissolved:

——— The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason.———

So many ill-sorted things are here joined, that the mind can see nothing clearly; the morning *stealing* upon the darkness, and at the same time *melting* it; the senses of men *chasing fumes, ignorant fumes,* and *fumes* that *mantle*. So again in Romeo and Juliet:

——— as glorious,
As is a winged messenger from heaven,
Unto the white upturned wondering eyes
Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,
When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

Here, the angel is represented as, at one moment *bestriding* the clouds, and *sailing* upon the air; and upon the *bosom* of the air too; which forms such a confused picture, that it is impossible for any imagination to comprehend it.

More correct writers than Shakspeare sometimes fall into this error of mixing metaphors. It is surprising how the following inaccuracy should have escaped Mr. Addison in his letter from Italy:

I bridle in my struggling muse with pain,
That longs to launch into a bolder strain.†

The muse, figured as a horse, may be *bridled;* but when we speak of *launching,* we make it a ship; and by no force of imagination, can it be supposed both a horse and a ship at one moment; *bridled,* to hinder it from *launching*. The same author, in one of his num-

* 'We must be particularly attentive to end with the same kind of metaphor with which we have begun. Some, when they begin the figure with a tempest, conclude it with a conflagration; which forms a shameful inconsistency.'

† In my observation on this passage, I find, that I had coincided with Dr. Johnson, who passes a similar censure upon it in his life of Addison.

bers in the Spectator, says, 'There is not a single view of human nature, which is not sufficient to extinguish the seeds of pride.' Observe the incoherence of the things here joined together, making 'a view extinguish,' and extinguish 'seeds.'

Horace, also, is incorrect, in the following passage:

Urit enim fulgore suo qui pregravat artes
Infra se positas.——

Urit qui *pregravat.*—He dazzles who bears down with his weight; makes plainly an inconsistent mixture of metaphorical ideas. Neither can this other passage be altogether vindicated:

Ah! quantâ laboras in Charybdi,
Digne puer, meliore flammâ!

Where a whirlpool of water, Charybdis, is said to be a flame, not good enough for this young man; meaning, that he was unfortunate in the object of his passion. Flame is, indeed, become almost a literal word for the passion of love; but as it still retains, in some degree, its figurative power, it should never have been used as synonymous with water, and mixed with it in the same metaphor. hen Mr. Pope (Eloisa to Abelard) says,

All then is full, possessing and possest,
No craving void left aching in the breast;

A *void* may, metaphorically, be said to *crave*; but can a void be said to *ache?*

A good rule has been given for examining the propriety of metaphors, when we doubt whether or not they be of the mixed kind; namely, that we should try to form a picture upon them, and consider how the parts would agree, and what sort of figure the whole would present, when delineated with a pencil. By this means we should become sensible, whether inconsistent circumstances were mixed, and a monstrous image thereby produced, as in all those faulty instances I have now been giving; or whether the object was, all along, presented in one natural and consistent point of view.

As metaphors ought never to be mixed, so, in the sixth place, we should avoid crowding them together on the same object. Supposing each of the metaphors to be preserved distinct, yet, if they be heaped on one another, they produce a confusion somewhat of the same kind with the mixed metaphor. We may judge of this by the following passage from Horace:

Motum ex Metello consule civicum,
Bellique causas, et vitia, et modos,
Ludumque fortunæ, gravesque
Principum amicitias, et arma
Nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus,
Periculosæ plenum opus aleæ

Tractas, et incedis per ignes
Suppositos cineri doloso.* Lib. II. 1.

This passage, though very poetical, is, however, harsh and obscure; owing to no other cause but this, that three distinct metaphors are crowded together, to describe the difficulty of Pollio's writing a history of the civil wars. First, 'Tractas arma uncta cruoribus nondum expiatis;' next, 'Opus plenum periculosæ aleæ;' and then, 'Incedis per ignes, suppositos doloso cineri.' The mind has difficulty in passing readily through so many different views given it, in quick succession, of the same object.

The only other rule concerning metaphors, which I shall add, in the seventh place, is, that they be not too far pursued. If the resemblance on which the figure is founded, be long dwelt upon, and carried into all its minute circumstances, we make an allegory instead of a metaphor; we tire the reader, who soon becomes weary of this play of fancy; and we render our discourse obscure. This is called, straining a metaphor. Cowley deals in this to excess; and to this error is owing, in a great measure, that intricacy and harshness, in his figurative language, which I before remarked. Lord Shaftesbury is sometimes guilty of pursuing his metaphors too far. Fond, to a high degree, of every decoration of style, when once he had hit upon a figure that pleased him, he was extremely loath to part with it. Thus, in his Advice to an Author, having taken up soliloquy, or meditation, under the metaphor of a proper method of evacuation for an author, he pursues this metaphor through several pages, under all the forms 'of discharging crudities, throwing off froth and scum, bodily operation, taking physic, curing indigestion, giving vent to choler, bile, flatulencies, and tumours;' till, at last, the idea becomes nauseous. Dr. Young also often trespasses in the same way. The merit, however, of this writer in figurative language is great, and deserves to be remarked. No writer, ancient or modern, had a stronger imagination than Dr. Young, or one more fertile in figures of every kind. His metaphors are often new, and often natural and beautiful. But his imagination was strong and rich, rather than delicate and correct. Hence, in his Night Thoughts, there prevails an obscurity, and a

* Of warm commotions, wrathful jars,
The growing seeds of civil wars;
Of double fortune's cruel games,
The specious means, the private aims,
And fatal friendships of the guilty great,
Alas! how fatal to the Roman state!
Of mighty legions late subdued,
And arms with Latian blood imbrued;
Yet unatoned, (a labour vast,
Doubtful the die, and dire the cast!)
You treat adventurous, and incautious tread
On fires with faithless embers overspread.—FRANCIS.

hardness in his style. The metaphors are frequently too bold, and frequently too far pursued; the reader is dazzled rather than enlightened; and kept constantly on the stretch to keep pace with the author. We may observe, for instance, how the following metaphor is spun out:

> Thy thoughts are vagabond; all outward-bound,
> Midst sands, and rocks, and storms, to cruise for pleasure;
> If gain'd, dear bought; and better miss'd than gain'd.
> Fancy and sense, from an infected shore,
> Thy cargo brings; and pestilence the prize;
> Then such the thirst, insatiable thirst,
> By fond indulgence but inflamed the more,
> Fancy still cruises, when poor sense is tired.

Speaking of old age, he says it should

> Walk thoughtful on the silent solemn shore
> Of that vast ocean, it must sail so soon:
> And put good works on board; and wait the wind
> That shortly blows us into worlds unknown.

The two first lines are uncommonly beautiful; 'walk thoughtful on the silent,' &c. but when he continues the metaphor, 'to putting good works on board, and waiting the wind,' it plainly becomes strained, and sinks in dignity. Of all the English authors, I know none so happy in his metaphors as Mr. Addison. His imagination was neither so rich nor as strong as Dr. Young's; but far more chaste and delicate. Perspicuity, natural grace, and ease, always distinguish his figures. They are neither harsh nor strained; they never appear to have been studied or sought after; but seem to rise of their own accord from the subject, and constantly embellish it.

I have now treated fully of the metaphor, and the rules that should govern it; a part of style so important, that it required particular illustration. I have only to add a few words concerning Allegory.

An allegory may be regarded as a continued metaphor; as it is the representation of some one thing by another that resembles it; and that is made to stand for it. Thus, in Prior's Henry and Emma, Emma in the following allegorical manner describes her constancy to Henry:

> Did I but purpose to embark with thee
> On the smooth surface of a summer's sea,
> While gentle zephyrs play with prosp'rous gales,
> And fortune's favour fills the swelling sails,
> But would forsake the ship, and make the shore
> When the winds whistle, and the tempests roar?

We may take also from the Scriptures a very fine example of an allegory, in the eightieth Psalm; where the people of Israel are represented under the image of a vine, and the figure is supported

throughout with great correctness and beauty: 'Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt, thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it; and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs into the sea, and her branches into the river. Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it; and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine!' Here there is no circumstance (except perhaps one phrase at the beginning, 'thou hast cast out the heathen') that does not strictly agree to a vine; whilst at the same time the whole quadrates happily with the Jewish state represented by this figure. This is the first and principal requisite in the conduct of an allegory, that the figurative and the literal meaning be not mixed inconsistently together. For instance, instead of describing the vine, as wasted by the boar from the wood and devoured by the wild beast of the field, had the Psalmist said, it was afflicted by heathens, or overcome by enemies (which is the real meaning), this would have ruined the allegory, and produced the same confusion, of which I gave examples in metaphors, when the figurative and literal sense are mixed and jumbled together. Indeed, the same rules that were given for metaphors, may also be applied to allegories, on account of the affinity they bear to each other. The only material difference between them, besides the one being short, and the other being prolonged, is, that a metaphor always explains itself by the words that are connected with it in their proper and natural meaning; as when I say, 'Achilles was a lion;' an 'able minister is the pillar of the state;' my lion and my pillar are sufficiently interpreted by the mention of Achilles and the minister, which I join to them: but an allegory is, or may be, allowed to stand more disconnected with the literal meaning; the interpretation not so directly pointed out, but left to our own reflection.

Allegories were a favourite method of delivering instructions in ancient times; for what we call fables or parables are no other than allegories; where, by words and actions attributed to beasts or inanimate objects, the dispositions of men are figured; and what we call the moral, is the unfigured sense or meaning of the allegory. An enigma or riddle is also a species of allegory; one thing represented or imagined by another, but purposely wrapped up under so many circumstances, as to be rendered obscure. Where a riddle is not intended, it is always a fault in allegory to be too dark. The meaning should be easily seen through the figure employed to shadow it. However, the proper mixture of light and shade in such compositions, the exact adjustment of all the figurative cir-

cumstances with the literal sense, so as neither to lay the meaning too bare and open, nor to cover and wrap it up too much, has ever been found an affair of great nicety; and there are few species of composition in which it is more difficult to write so as to please and command attention, than in allegories. In some of the visions of the Spectator, we have examples of allegories very happily executed

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LECTURE XVI.

HYPERBOLE--PERSONIFICATION--APOSTROPHE.

THE next figure concerning which I am to treat is called Hyperbole, or Exaggeration. It consists in magnifying an object beyond its natural bounds. It may be considered sometimes as a trope, and sometimes as a figure of thought: and here indeed the distinction between these two classes begins not to be clear, nor is it of any importance that we should have recourse to metaphysical subtilties, in order to keep them distinct. Whether we call it trope or figure, it is plain that it is a mode of speech which hath some foundation in nature. For in all languages, even in common conversation, hyperbolical expressions very frequently occur; as swift as the wind; as white as the snow; and the like: and our common forms of compliment are almost all of them extravagant hyperboles. If any thing be remarkably good or great in its kind, we are instantly ready to add to it some exaggerating epithet; and to make it the greatest or best we ever saw. The imagination has always a tendency to gratify itself, by magnifying its present object, and carrying it to excess. More or less of this hyperbolical turn will prevail in language according to the liveliness of imagination among the people who speak it. Hence young people deal always much in hyperboles. Hence the language of the orientals was far more hyperbolical than that of the Europeans, who are of more phlegmatic, or, if you please, of more correct imagination. Hence, among all writers in early times, and in the rude periods of society, we may expect this figure to abound. Greater experience, and more cultivated society, abate the warmth of imagination, and chasten the manner of expression.

The exaggerated expressions to which our ears are accustomed in conversation, scarcely strike us as hyperboles. In an instant we make the proper abatement, and understand them according to their just value. But when there is something striking and unusual in the form of a hyperbolical expression, it then rises into a figure of speech which draws our attention: and here it is necessary to observe, that unless the reader's imagination be in such a

state as disposes it to rise and swell along with the hyperbolical expression, he is always hurt and offended by it. For a sort of disagreeable force is put upon him; he is required to strain and exert his fancy, when he feels no inclination to make any such effort. Hence the hyperbole is a figure of difficult management; and ought neither to be frequently used, nor long dwelt upon. On some occasions, it is undoubtedly proper, being, as was before observed, the natural style of a sprightly and heated imagination; but when hyperboles are unseasonable, or too frequent, they render a composition frigid and unaffecting. They are the resource of an author of feeble imagination; of one, describing objects which either want native dignity in themselves; or whose dignity he cannot shew by describing them simply, and in their just proportions, and is therefore obliged to rest upon tumid and exaggerated expressions.

Hyperboles are of two kinds; either such as are employed in description, or such as are suggested by the warmth of passion. The best by far, are those which are the effect of passion: for if the imagination has a tendency to magnify its objects beyond their natural proportion, passion possesses this tendency in a vastly stronger degree; and therefore not only excuses the most daring figures, but very often renders them natural and just. All passions, without exception, love, terror, amazement, indignation, anger, and even grief, throw the mind into confusion, aggravate their objects, and of course prompt a hyperbolical style. Hence the following sentiments of Satan in Milton, as strongly as they are described, contain nothing but what is natural and proper; exhibiting the picture of a mind agitated with rage and despair:

> Me, miserable! which way shall I fly
> Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
> Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell;
> And in the lowest depth, a lower deep,
> Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide,
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.---B. iv. l. 73.

In simple description, though hyperboles are not excluded, yet they must be used with more caution, and require more preparation, in order to make the mind relish them. Either the object described must be of that kind, which of itself seizes the fancy strongly, and disposes it to run beyond bounds; something vast, surprising, and new; or the writer's art must be exerted in heating the fancy gradually, and preparing it to think highly of the object which he intends to exaggerate. When a poet is describing an earthquake or a storm, or when he has brought us into the midst of a battle, we can bear strong hyperboles without displeasure. But when he is describing only a woman in grief, it is impossible not to be disgusted with such wild exaggeration as the following, in one of our dramatic poets:

——— I found her on the floor
In all the storm of grief, yet beautiful;
Pouring forth tears at such a lavish rate,
That were the world on fire, they might have drown'd
The wrath of Heaven, and quench'd the mighty ruin.—LEE.

This is mere bombast. The person herself who was under the distracting agitations of grief, might be permitted to hyperbolize strongly; but the spectator describing her, cannot be allowed an equal liberty: for this plain reason, that the one is supposed to utter the sentiments of passion, the other speaks only the language of description, which is always, according to the dictates of nature, on a lower tone: a distinction which, however obvious, has not been attended to by many writers.

How far a hyperbole, supposing it properly introduced, may be safely carried without overstretching it; what is the proper measure and boundary of this figure, cannot, as far as I know, be ascertained by any precise rule. Good sense and just taste must determine the point, beyond which, if we pass, we become extravagant. Lucan may be pointed out as an author apt to be excessive in his hyperboles. Among the compliments paid by the Roman poets to their emperors, it had become fashionable to ask them, what part of the heavens they would choose for their habitation, after they should have become gods? Virgil had already carried this sufficiently far in his address to Augustus:

-Tibi brachia contrahit ingens
Scorpius, et Cœli justâ plus parte relinquit.*—GEOR. i.

But this did not suffice Lucan. Resolved to outdo all his predecessors, in a like address to Nero, he very gravely beseeches him not to choose his place near either of the poles, but to be sure to occupy just the middle of the heavens, lest, by going either to one side or other, his weight should overset the universe:

Sed neque in Arctoo sedem tibi legeris orbe
Nec polus adversi calidus quà mergitur austri;
Ætheris immensi partem si presseris unam
Sentiet axis onus. Librati pondera Cœli
Orbe tene medio.†—— PHARS. i. 53.

* 'The Scorpion, ready to receive thy laws,
Yields half his region, and contracts his paws.'

† But, oh! whatever be thy Godhead great,
Fix not in regions too remote thy seat;
Nor deign thou near the frozen Bear to shine,
Nor where the sultry southern stars decline.
Press not too much on any part the sphere.
Hard were the task thy weight divine to bear;
Soon would the axis feel th' unusual load,
And, groaning, bend beneath th' incumbent god?
O'er the mid orb more equal shalt thou rise,
And with a juster balance fix the skies.—ROWE

Such thoughts as these, are what the French call 'outrés,' and always proceed from a false fire of genius. The Spanish and African writers, as Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, are remarked for being fond of them. As in that epitaph on Charles V. by a Spanish writer:

> Pro tumulo ponas orbem, pro tegmine cœlum,
> Sidera pro facibus, pro lacrymis maria.

Sometimes they dazzle and impose by their boldness; but wherever reason and good sense are so much violated, there can be no true beauty. Epigrammatic writers are frequently guilty in this respect; resting the whole merit of their epigrams on some extravagant hyperbolical turn; such as the following of Dr. Pitcairn's, upon Holland's being gained from the ocean:

> Tellurem fecere Dii; sua littora Belgæ;
> Atque opus immensæ molis utrumque fuit.
> Dii vacuo sparsas glomerârunt æthere terras,
> Nil ibi quod operi possit obesse fuit.
> At Belgis, maria et cœli naturaque rerum
> Obstitit; obstantes hi domuêre Deos.

So much for the hyperbole. We proceed now to those figures which lie altogether in the thought; where the words are taken in their common and literal sense.

Among these, the first place is unquestionably due to Personification, or that figure by which we attribute life and action to inanimate objects. The technical term for this is Prosopopœia: but as personification is of the same import, and more allied to our own language, it will be better to use this word.

It is a figure, the use of which is very extensive, and its foundation laid deep in human nature. At first view, and when considered abstractly, it would appear to be a figure of the utmost boldness, and to border on the extravagant and ridiculous. For what can seem more remote from the track of reasonable thought, than to speak of stones and trees, and fields and rivers, as if they were living creatures, and to attribute to them thought and sensation, affections and actions? One might imagine this to be no more than childish conceit, which no person of taste could relish. In fact, however, the case is very different. No such ridiculous effect is produced by personification, when properly employed; on the contrary, it is found to be natural and agreeable; nor is any very uncommon degree of passion required, in order to make us relish it. All poetry, even in its most gentle and humble forms, abounds with it. From prose, it is far from being excluded; nay, in common conversation, very frequent approaches are made to it. When we say, the ground *thirsts* for rain, or the earth *smiles* with plenty; when we speak of ambition's being *restless*, or a disease being *deceitful*, such expressions shew the facility with which the mind

can accommodate the properties of living creatures to things that are inanimate, or to abstract conceptions of its own forming.

Indeed, it is very remarkable, that there is a wonderful proneness in human nature to animate all objects. Whether this arises from a sort of assimilating principle, from a propension to spread a resemblance of ourselves over all other things, or from whatever other cause it arises, so it is, that almost every emotion which in the least agitates the mind, bestows upon its object a momentary idea of life. Let a man by any unwary step sprain his ankle, or hurt his foot upon a stone, and, in the ruffled discomposed moment, he will, sometimes, feel himself disposed to break the stone in pieces, or to utter passionate expressions against it, as if it had done him an injury. If one has been long accustomed to a certain set of objects, which have made a strong impression on his imagination; as to a house, where he has passed many agreeable years; or to fields, and trees, and mountains, among which he has often walked with the greatest delight: when he is obliged to part with them, especially if he has no prospect of ever seeing them again, he can scarce avoid having somewhat of the same feeling as when he is leaving old friends. They seem endowed with life. They become objects of his affection; and in the moment of his parting, it scarce seems absurd to him, to give vent to his feeling in words, and to take a formal adieu.

So strong is that impression of life which is made upon us, by the more magnificent and striking objects of nature especially, that I doubt not, in the least, of this having been one cause of the multiplication of divinities in the heathen world. The belief of dryads and naiads, of the genius of the wood, and the god of the river, among men of lively imaginations, in the early ages of the world, easily arose from this turn of mind. When their favourite rural objects had often been animated in their fancy, it was an easy transition to attribute to them some real divinity, some unseen power or genius which inhabited them, or in some peculiar manner belonging to them. Imagination was highly gratified, by thus gaining somewhat to rest upon with more stability; and when belief coincided so much with imagination, very slight causes would be sufficient to establish it.

From this deduction may be easily seen how it comes to pass, that personification makes so great a figure in all compositions, where imagination or passion have any concern. On innumerable occasions, it is the very language of imagination and passion, and, therefore, deserves to be attended to, and examined with peculiar care. There are three different degrees of this figure; which it is necessary to remark and distinguish, in order to determine the propriety of its use. The first is, when some of the properties or qualities of living creatures are ascribed to inanimate objects; the

second, when those inanimate objects are introduced as acting like such as have life; and the third, when they are represented, either as speaking to us, or as listening to what we say to them.

The first and lowest degree of this figure, consists in ascribing to inanimate objects some of the qualities of living creatures. Where this is done, as is most commonly the case, in a word, or two, and by way of an epithet added to the object, as, 'a raging storm, a deceitful disease, a cruel disaster,' &c. it raises the style so little, that the humblest discourse will admit it without any force. This, indeed, is such an obscure degree of personification, that one may doubt whether it deserves the name, and might not be classed with simple metaphors, which escape in a manner unnoticed. Happily employed, however, it sometimes adds beauty and sprightliness to an expression, as in this line of Virgil:

Aut conjurato descendens Dacus ab Istro.---GEOR. ii. 474.

Where the personal epithet, *conjurato*, applied to the river *Istro*, is infinitely more poetical than if it had been applied to the person thus:

Aut conjuratus descendens Dacus ab Istro.

A very little taste will make any one feel the difference between these two lines.

The next degree of this figure is, when we introduce inanimate objects acting like those that have life. Here we rise a step higher, and the personification becomes sensible. According to the nature of the action, which we attribute to those inanimate objects, and the particularity with which we describe it, such is the strength of the figure. When pursued to any length, it belongs only to studied harangues, to highly-figured and eloquent discourse; when slightly touched, it may be admitted into subjects of less elevation. Cicero, for instance, speaking of the cases where killing another is lawful in self-defence, uses the following words: 'Aliquando nobis gladius ad occidendum hominem ab ipsis porrigitur legibus.' (Orat. pro Milone.) The expression is happy. The laws are personified, as reaching forth their hand to give us a sword for putting one to death. Such short personifications as these may be admitted, even into moral treatises, or works of cool reasoning; and, provided they be easy and not strained, and that we be not cloyed with too frequent returns of them, they have a good effect on style, and render it both strong and lively.

The genius of our language gives us an advantage in the use of this figure. As, with us, no substantive nouns have gender, or are masculine and feminine, except the proper names of male and female creatures; by giving a gender to any inanimate object, or abstract idea, that is, in place of the pronoun *it*, using the personal pronouns, *he* or *she*, we presently raise the style, and begin

personification. In solemn discourse this may often be done to good purpose when speaking of religion, or virtue, or our country, or any such object of dignity. I shall give a remarkably fine example from a sermon of Bishop Sherlock's, where we shall see natural religion beautifully personified, and be able to judge from it of the spirit and grace which this figure, when well conducted, bestows on a discourse. I must take notice, at the same time, that it is an instance, of this figure, carried as far as prose, even in its highest elevation, will admit, and, therefore, suited only to compositions where the great efforts of eloquence are allowed. The author is comparing together our Saviour and Mahomet: 'Go, says he, ' to your Natural Religion; lay before her Mahomet, and his disciples, arrayed in armour and blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands who fell by his victorious sword. Shew her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirement; shew her the prophet's chamber; his concubines and his wives; and let her hear him allege revelation, and a divine commission, to justify his adultery and lust. When she is tired with this prospect, then shew her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men. Let her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to his table to view his poor fare; and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross; let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!*—When Natural Religion has thus viewed both, ask her, which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene, through the eyes of the centurion, who attended at the cross. By him she spoke, and said, *Truly, this man was the Son of God.*'* This is more than elegant; it is truly sublime. The whole passage is animated; and the figure rises at the conclusion, when natural religion, who, before, was only a spectator, is introduced as speaking by the centurion's voice. It has the better effect too, that it occurs at the conclusion of a discourse, where we naturally look for most warmth and dignity. Did Bishop Sherlock's Sermons, or, indeed, any English sermons whatever, afford us many passages equal to this, we should oftener have recourse to them for instances of the beauty of composition.

Hitherto we have spoken of prose; in poetry personifications of this kind are extremely frequent, and are indeed the life and soul

* Bishop Sherlock's Sermons, vol. i. disc. ix.

of it. We expect to find every thing animated in the descriptions of a poet who has a lively fancy. Accordingly Homer, the father and prince of poets, is remarkable for the use of this figure. War, peace, darts, spears, towns, rivers, every thing, in short, is alive in his writings. The same is the case with Milton and Shakspeare. No personification, in any author, is more striking, or introduced on a more proper occasion, than the following of Milton's on occasion of Eve's eating the forbidden fruit:

> So saying, her rash hand, in evil hour,
> Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck'd, she eat:
> Earth felt the wound; and Nature, from her seat,
> Sighing, through all her works, gave signs of woe,
> That all was lost.—— B. ix. 780.

All the circumstances and ages of men, poverty, riches, youth, old age, all the dispositions and passions, melancholy, love, grief, contentment, are capable of being personified in poetry, with great propriety. Of this, we meet with frequent examples in Milton's Allegro and Penseroso, Parnell's Hymn to Contentment, Thomson's Seasons, and all the good poets: nor, indeed, is it easy to set any bounds to personifications of this kind, in poetry.

One of the greatest pleasures we receive from poetry, is, to find ourselves always in the midst of our fellows; and to see every thing thinking, feeling, and acting, as we ourselves do. This is perhaps the principal charm of this sort of figured style, that it introduces us into society with all nature, and interests us, even in inanimate objects, by forming a connexion between them and us, through that sensibility which it ascribes to them. This is exemplified in the following beautiful passage of Thomson's Summer, wherein the life which he bestows upon all nature, when describing the effects of the rising sun, renders the scenery uncommonly gay and interesting:

> But yonder comes the powerful king of day,
> Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud,
> The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow
> Tipt with ethereal gold, his near approach
> Betoken glad.——
>
> ———— By thee refined,
> In brisker measures, the relucent stream
> Frisks o'er the mead. The precipice abrupt,
> Projecting horror on the blacken'd flood,
> Softens at thy return. The desert joys,
> Wildly through all his melancholy bounds;
> Rude ruins glitter; and the briny deep,
> Seen from some pointed promontory top,
> Reflects from every fluctuating wave
> A glance extensive as the day.——

The same effect is remarkable in that fine passage of Milton:

> ———— To the nuptial bower
> I led her blushing like the morn. All heaven

And happy constellations, on that hour,
Shed their selectest influence. The earth
Gave signs of gratulation, and each hill.
Joyous the birds: fresh gales, and gentle airs
Whisper'd it to the woods, and from their wings
Flung rose, flung odour from the spicy shrub,
Disporting.——

The third and highest degree of this figure remains to be mentioned, when inanimate objects are introduced, not only as feeling and acting, but as speaking to us, or hearing and listening when we address ourselves to them. This, though on several occasions far from being unnatural, is, however, more difficult in the execution, than the other kinds of personification. For this is plainly the boldest of all rhetorical figures; it is the style of strong passion only; and, therefore, never to be attempted, unless when the mind is considerably heated and agitated. A slight personification of some inanimate thing, acting as if it had life, can be relished by the mind, in the midst of cool description, and when its ideas are going on in the ordinary train. But it must be in a state of violent emotion, and have departed considerably from its common track of thought, before it can so far realize the personification of an insensible object, as to conceive it listening to what we say, or making any return to us. All strong passions, however, have a tendency to use this figure; not only love, anger, and indignation, but even those which are seemingly more dispiriting, such as grief, remorse, and melancholy. For all passions struggle for vent, and if they can find no other object, will, rather than be silent, pour themselves forth to woods, and rocks, and the most insensible things; especially, if these be in any degree connected with the causes and objects that have thrown the mind into this agitation. Hence, in poetry, where the greatest liberty is allowed to the language of passion, it is easy to produce many beautiful examples of this figure. Milton affords us an extremely fine one, in that moving and tender address which Eve makes to Paradise, just before she is compelled to leave it.

Oh! unexpected stroke, worse than of death!
Must I thus leave thee, Paradise! thus leave
Thee, native soil, these happy walks, and shades,
Fit haunt of gods! where I had hope to spend
Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day,
Which must be mortal to us both. O flowers!
That never will in other climate grow,
My early visitation and my last
At ev'n, which I bred up with tender hand,
From your first op'ning buds, and gave you names!
Who now shall rear you to the sun, or rank
Your tribes, and water from th' ambrosial fount?—Book ii l. 268.

This is altogether the language of nature, and of female passion. It is observable, that all plaintive passions are peculiarly prone to

the use of this figure. The complaints which Philoctetes, in Sophocles, pours out to the rocks and caves of Lemnos, amidst the excess of his grief and despair, are remarkably fine examples of it.* And there are frequent examples, not in poetry only, but in real life, of persons, when just about to suffer death, taking a passionate farewell of the sun, moon, and stars, or other sensible objects around them.

There are two great rules for the management of this sort of personification. The first rule is, never to attempt it, unless when prompted by a strong passion, and never to continue it when the passion begins to flag. It is one of those high ornaments, which can only find place in the most warm and spirited parts of composition; and there, too, must be employed with moderation.

The second rule is, never to personify any object in this way, but such as has some dignity in itself, and can make a proper figure in this elevation to which we raise it. The observance of this rule is required, even in the lower degrees of personification; but still more, when an address is made to the personified object. To address the corpse of a deceased friend is natural, but to address the clothes which he wore, introduces mean and degrading ideas. So also, addressing the several parts of one's body, as if they were animated, is not congruous to the dignity of passion. For this reason, I must condemn the following passage, in a very beautiful poem of Mr. Pope's, Eloisa to Abelard:

> Dear fatal name! rest ever unreveal'd,
> Nor pass these lips in holy silence seal'd.
> Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
> Where, mix'd with God's, his loved idea lies:
> Oh! write it not, my hand!—his name appears
> Already written:—blot it out, my tears!

Here are several different objects and parts of the body personified; and each of them is addressed or spoken to; let us consider with what propriety. The first is, the name of Abelard: 'Dear fatal name! rest ever,' &c. To this no reasonable objection can be made. For, as the name of a person often stands for the person himself, and suggests the same ideas, it can bear this personification with sufficient dignity. Next, Eloisa speaks to herself; and personifies her heart for this purpose: 'Hide it, my heart, within

* Ὦ λιμενες, ὦ προϐλητες, ὦ ξυνουσιαι
Θηρων ορειων, ὦ καταρρωγες πετραι
Υμιν ταδ'· ȣ γαρ αλλον οιδ' ὁτω λεγω·
Ανακλαιομαι παρȣσι τοις ειωθεσιν, &c.

'O mountains, rivers, rocks, and savage herds,
To you I speak! to you alone I now
Must breathe my sorrows! you are wont to hear
My sad complaints, and I will tell you all
That I have suffered from Achilles' son!'—FRANKLIN.

that close,' &c. As the heart is a dignified part of the human frame, and is often put for the mind or affections, this also may pass without blame. But, when from her heart she passes to her hand, and tells her hand not to write his name, this is forced and unnatural; a personified hand is low, and not in the style of true passion; and the figure becomes still worse, when, in the last place, she exhorts her tears to blot out what her hand had written. 'Oh! write it not,' &c. There is, in these two lines, an air of epigrammatic conceit, which native passion never suggests; and which is altogether unsuitable to the tenderness which breathes through the rest of that excellent poem.

In prose compositions, this figure requires to be used with still greater moderation and delicacy. The same liberty is not allowed to the imagination there, as in poetry. The same assistances cannot be obtained for raising passion to its proper height by the force of numbers, and the glow of style. However, addresses to inanimate objects are not excluded from prose; but have their place only in the higher species of oratory. A public speaker may on some occasions very properly address religion or virtue; or his native country, or some city or province, which has suffered perhaps great calamities, or been the scene of some memorable action. But we must remember, that as such addresses are among the highest efforts of eloquence, they should never be attempted, unless by persons of more than ordinary genius. For if the orator fails in his design of moving our passions by them, he is sure of being laughed at. Of all frigid things, the most frigid are the awkward and unseasonable attempts sometimes made towards such kinds of personification, especially if they be long continued. We see the writer or speaker toiling, and labouring, to express the language of some passion, which he neither feels himself, nor can make us feel. We remain not only cold, but frozen; and are at full leisure to criticise on the ridiculous figure which the personified object makes, when we ought to have been transported with a glow of enthusiasm. Some of the French writers, particularly Bossuet and Flechier, in their sermons and funeral orations, have attempted and executed this figure, not without warmth and dignity. Their works are exceedingly worthy of being consulted, for instances of this, and of several other ornaments of style. Indeed, the vivacity and ardour of the French genius is more suited to this bold species of oratory, than the more correct but less animated genius of the British, who in their prose works very rarely attempt any of the high figures of eloquence.* So much for personifications, or prosopopœia in all its different forms.

* In the 'Oraisons Funebres de M. Bossuet,' which I consider as one of the master-pieces of modern eloquence, Apostrophes and addresses to personified objects frequently

Apostrophe is a figure so much of the same kind, that it will not require many words. It is an address to a real person; but one who is either absent or dead, as if he were present and listening to us. It is so much allied to an address to inanimate objects personified, that both these figures are sometimes called apostrophes. However, the proper apostrophe is in boldness one degree lower than the address to personified objects; for it certainly requires a less effort of imagination to suppose persons present who are dead or absent, than to animate insensible beings, and direct our discourse to them. Both figures are subject to the same rule of being prompted by passion, in order to render them natural; for both are the language of passion or strong emotions only. Among the poets apostrophe is frequent; as in Virgil:

——— Pereunt Hypanisque Dymasque
Confixi a sociis; nec te, tua plurima, Pantheu
Labentem pietas, nec Apollinis infula texit!*

The poems of Ossian are full of the most beautiful instances of this figure: 'Weep on the rocks of roaring winds, O maid of Inistore; bend thy fair head over the waves, thou fairer than the ghost of the hills, when it moves in a sunbeam at noon over the silence

occur, and are supported with much spirit. Thus, for instance, in the funeral oration of Mary of Austria, queen of France, the author addresses Algiers, in the prospect of the advantage which the arms of Louis XIV. were to gain over it: 'Avant lui la France, presque sans vaisseaux, tenoit en vain aux deux mers. Maintenant, on les voit couvertes depuis le Levant jusqu'au couchant de nos flottes victorieuses: et la hardiesse Françoise porte par tout la terreur avec le nom de Louis. Tu cederas, tu tomberas sous ce vainqueur, Alger! riche des dépouilles de la Chretienté. Tu disois en ton cœur avare, je tiens la mer sous mes loix, et les nations sont ma proie. La legereté de tes vaisseaux te donnoit de la confiance. Mais tu te verras attaqué dans tes murailles, comme un oiseau ravissant qu'on iroit chercher parmi ces rochers, et dans sons nid, où il partage son butin à ses petits. Tu rends dejà tes esclaves. Louis a brisé les fers, dont tu acablois ses sujets,' &c. In another passage of the same oration, he thus apostrophizes the Isle of Pheasants, which had been rendered famous for being the scene of those conferences in which the treaty of the Pyrennees between France and Spain, and the marriage of this Princess with the King of France, were concluded. 'Isle pacifique, où se doivent terminer les differends de deux grands empires à qui tu sers de limites: isle eternellement mémorable par les conférences de deux grands ministres.———Auguste journée où deux fiéres nations, long tems enemies, et alors reconciliées par Marie Therese s'avançent sur leur confins, leur rois a leur tête, non plus pour se combattre, mais pour s'embrasser.—Fêtes sacrées, mariage fortuné, voile nuptial, bénédiction, sacrifice, puis-je mêler aujourdhui vos ceremonies, et vos pompes, avec ces pompes funebres, et le comble des grandeurs avec leur ruines!' In the funeral oration of Henrietta, queen of England (which is perhaps the noblest of all his compositions), after recounting all she had done to support her unfortunate husband, he concludes with this beautiful apostrophe: 'O mere! O femme! O reine admirable et digne d'une meilleure fortune, si les fortunes de la terre étoient quelque chose! Enfin il faut ceder à votre sort. Vous avez assez soutenu l'état, qui est attaqué par une force invincible et divine. Il ne reste plus desormais, si non que vous teniez ferme parmi ses ruines.'

* Nor, Pantheus! thee, thy mitre, nor the bands
Of awful Phœbus, saved from impious hands.

of Morven! He is fallen! Thy youth is low; pale beneath the sword of Cuthullin!'* Quinctilian affords us a very fine example in prose; when, in the beginning of his sixth book, deploring the untimely death of his son, which had happened during the course of the work, he makes a very moving and tender apostrophe to him. 'Nam quo ille animo, quâ medicorum admiratione, mensium octo valetudinem tulit? ut me in supremis consolatus est? quam etiam jam deficiens, jamque non noster, ipsum illum alienatæ mentis errorem circa solas literas habuit? Tuosne ergo, O meæ spes inanes! labentes oculos, tuum fugientem spiritum vidi? Tuum corpus frigidum, exangue complexus, animam recipere, auramque communem haurire amplius potui? Tene, consulari nuper adoptione ad omnium spes honorum patris admotum, te, avunculo prætori generum destinatum; te, omnium spe Atticæ eloquentiæ candidatum, parens superstes tantum ad pœnas amisi!'† In this passage, Quinctilian shews the true genius of an orator, as much as he does elsewhere that of the critic.

For such bold figures of discourse as strong personifications, addresses to personified objects, and apostrophes, the glowing imagination of the ancient oriental nations was particularly fitted. Hence, in the sacred Scriptures, we find some very remarkable instances: 'O thou sword of the Lord! how long will it be ere thou be quiet; put thyself up into the scabbard, rest and be still! How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there he hath appointed it.'‡ There is one passage in particular, which I must not omit to mention, because it contains a greater assemblage of sublime ideas, of bold and daring figures, than is perhaps any where to be met with. It is in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet thus describes the fall of the Assyrian empire: 'Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke: he that

* Fingal, b. i.

† 'With what spirit, and how much to the admiration of the physicians, did he bear throughout eight months his lingering distress! With what tender attention did he study, even in the last extremity, to comfort me! And, when no longer himself, how affecting was it to behold the disordered efforts of his wandering mind, wholly employed on subjects of literature! Ah! my frustrated and fallen hopes! Have I then beheld your closing eyes, and heard the last groan issue from your lips? After having embraced your cold and breathless body, how was it in my power to draw the vital air, or continue to drag a miserable life? When I had just beheld you raised by consular adoption to the prospect of all your father's honours, destined to be son-in-law to your uncle the Prætor, pointed out by general expectation as the successful candidate for the prize of Attic eloquence, in this moment of your opening honours, must I lose you for ever, and remain an unhappy parent, surviving only to suffer woe?'

‡ Jer. xlvii. 6, 7.

ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth: it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart; I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms? that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof? that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave, like an abominable branch: and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit, as a carcass trodden under feet.' This whole passage is full of sublimity. Every object is animated; a variety of personages are introduced: we hear the Jews, the fir-trees, and cedars of Lebanon, the ghosts of departed kings, the king of Babylon himself, and those who look upon his body, all speaking in their order, and acting their different parts without confusion.

LECTURE XVII.

COMPARISON, ANTITHESIS, INTERROGATION, EXCLAMATION, AND OTHER FIGURES OF SPEECH.

We are still engaged in the consideration of figures of speech; which, as they add much to the beauty of style when properly employed, and are at the same time liable to be greatly abused, require a careful discussion. As it would be tedious to dwell on all the variety of figurative expressions which rhetoricians have enumerated, I chose to select the capital figures, such as occur most frequently, and to make my remarks on these; the principles and

rules laid down concerning them will sufficiently direct us to the use of the rest, either in prose or poetry. Of metaphor, which is the most common of them all, I treated fully; and in the last Lecture I discoursed of hyperbole, personification, and apostrophe. This Lecture will nearly finish what remains on the head of figures.

Comparison, or simile, is what I am to treat of first: a figure frequently employed both by poets and prose-writers, for the ornament of composition. In a former Lecture, I explained fully the difference betwixt this and metaphor. A metaphor is a comparison implied, but not expressed as such; as when I say, 'Achilles is a lion,' meaning that he resembles one in courage or strength. A comparison is, when the resemblance between two objects is expressed in form, and generally pursued more fully than the nature of a metaphor admits; as when I say, 'The actions of princes are like those great rivers, the course of which every one beholds, but their springs have been seen by few.' This slight instance will shew, that a happy comparison is a kind of sparkling ornament, which adds not a little lustre and beauty to discourse; and hence such figures are termed by Cicero, 'Orationis lumina.'

The pleasure we take in comparisons is just and natural. We may remark three different sources whence it arises. First, from the pleasure which nature has annexed to that act of the mind by which we compare any two objects together, trace resemblances among those that are different, and difference among those that resemble each other; a pleasure, the final cause of which is, to prompt us to remark and observe, and thereby to make us advance in useful knowledge. This operation of the mind is naturally and universally agreeable; as appears from the delight which even children have in comparing things together, as soon as they are capable of attending to the objects that surround them. Secondly, the pleasure of comparison arises from the illustration which the simile employed gives to the principal object; from the clearer view of it which it presents; or the more strong impression of it which it stamps upon the mind: and, thirdly, it arises from the introduction of a new and commonly a splendid object, associated to the principal one of which we treat; and from the agreeable picture which that object presents to the fancy; new scenes being thereby brought into view, which, without the assistance of this figure, we could not have enjoyed.

All comparisons whatever may be reduced under two heads, *explaining* and *embellishing* comparisons. For when a writer likens the object of which he treats to any other thing, it always is, or at least always should be, with a view either to make us understand that object more distinctly, or to dress it up, and adorn it. All manner of subjects admit of explaining comparisons.

Let an author be reasoning ever so strictly, or treating the most abstruse point in philosophy, he may very properly introduce a comparison, merely with a view to make his subject better understood. Of this nature is the following in Mr. Harris's Hermes, employed to explain a very abstract point, the distinction between the powers of sense and imagination in the human mind. 'As wax,' says he, 'would not be adequate to the purpose of signature, if it had not the power to retain as well as to receive the impression, the same holds of the soul with respect to sense and imagination. Sense is its receptive power; imagination its retentive. Had it sense without imagination, it would not be as wax, but as water, where though all impressions be instantly made, yet as soon as they are made they are instantly lost.' In comparisons of this nature, the understanding is concerned much more than the fancy: and therefore the only rules to be observed, with respect to them, are, that they be clear, and that they be useful; that they tend to render our conception of the principal object more distinct; and that they do not lead our view aside, and bewilder it with any false light.

But embellishing comparisons, introduced not so much with a view to inform and instruct, as to adorn the subject of which we treat, are those with which we are chiefly concerned at present, as figures of speech; and those, indeed, which most frequently occur. Resemblance, as I before mentioned, is the foundation of this figure. We must not, however, take resemblance, in too strict a sense, for actual similitude and likeness of appearance. Two objects may sometimes be very happily compared to one another, though they resemble each other, strictly speaking, in nothing; only, because they agree in the effects which they produce upon the mind; because they raise a train of similar, or, what may be called, concordant ideas; so that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, serves to strengthen the impression made by the other. For example, to describe the nature of soft and melancholy music, Ossian says, 'The music of Carryl was, like the memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul.' This is happy and delicate. Yet surely, no kind of music has any resemblance to a feeling of the mind, such as the memory of past joys. Had it been compared to the voice of the nightingale, or the murmur of the stream, as it would have been by some ordinary poet, the likeness would have been more strict; but, by founding his simile upon the effect which Carryl's music produced, the poet, while he conveys a very tender image, gives us, at the same time, a much stronger impression of the nature and strain of that music: 'Like the memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul.'

In general, whether comparisons be founded on the similitude of

the two objects compared, or on some analogy and agreement in their effects, the fundamental requisite of a comparison is, that it shall serve to illustrate the object for the sake of which it is introduced, and to give us a stronger conception of it. Some little excursions of fancy may be permitted, in pursuing the simile; but they must never deviate far from the principal object. If it be a great and noble one, every circumstance in the comparison must tend to aggrandize it; if it be a beautiful one, to render it more amiable; if terrible, to fill us with more awe. But to be a little more particular: The rules to be given concerning comparisons, respect chiefly two articles; the propriety of their introduction, and the nature of the objects whence they are taken.

First, the propriety of their introduction. From what has been already said of comparisons, it appears that they are not, like the figures of which I treated in the last Lecture, the language of strong passion. No; they are the language of imagination rather than of passion; of an imagination sprightly, indeed, and warmed; but undisturbed by any violent or agitating emotion. Strong passion is too severe to admit this play of fancy. It has no leisure to cast about for resembling objects; it dwells on that object which has seized and taken possession of the soul. It is too much occupied and filled by it, to turn its view aside, or to fix its attention on any other thing. An author, therefore, can scarcely commit a greater fault, than, in the midst of passion, to introduce a simile. Metaphorical expression may be allowable in such a situation; though even this may be carried too far: but the pomp and solemnity of a formal comparison is altogether a stranger to passion. It changes the key in a moment; relaxes and brings down the mind; and shews us a writer perfectly at his ease, while he is personating some other, who is supposed to be under the torment of agitation. Our writers of tragedies are very apt to err here. In some of Mr. Rowe's plays, these flowers of similes have been strewed unseasonably. Mr. Addison's Cato, too, is justly censurable in this respect; as, when Portius, just after Lucia had bid him farewell for ever, and when he should naturally have been represented as in the most violent anguish, makes his reply in a studied and affected comparison:

> Thus o'er the dying lamp, th' unsteady flame
> Hangs quivering on a point, leaps off by fits,
> And falls again, as loath to quit its hold.
> Thou must not go; my soul still hovers o'er thee,
> And can't get loose.

Every one must be sensible, that this is quite remote from the language of nature on such occasions.

However, as comparison is not the style of strong passion, so neither, when employed for embellishment, is it the language of a

mind wholly unmoved. It is a figure of dignity, and always requires some elevation in the subject, in order to make it proper; for it supposes the imagination to be uncommonly enlivened, though the heart be not agitated by passion. In a word, the proper place of comparisons lies in the middle region between the highly pathetic, and the very humble style. This is a wide field, and gives ample range to the figure. But even this field we must take care not to overstock with it. For, as we before said, it is a sparkling ornament, and all things that sparkle, dazzle and fatigue, if they recur too often. Similes should, even in poetry, be used with moderation; but, in prose writings, much more: otherwise, the style will become disagreeably florid, and the ornament lose its virtue and effect.

I proceed, next, to the rules that relate to objects whence comparisons should be drawn; supposing them introduced in their proper place.

In the first place, they must not be drawn from things which have too near and obvious a resemblance to the object with which we compare them. The great pleasure of the act of comparing lies, in discovering likenesses among things of different species, where we would not, at the first glance, expect a resemblance. There is little art or ingenuity in pointing out the resemblance of two objects, that are so much akin, or lie so near to one another in nature, that every one sees they must be alike. When Milton compares Satan's appearance, after his fall, to that of the sun suffering an eclipse, and affrighting the nations with portentous darkness, we are struck with the happiness and the dignity of the similitude. But when he compares Eve's bower in Paradise, to the arbour of Pomona; or Eve herself, to a dryad, or wood-nymph; we receive little entertainment; as every one sees, that one arbour must, of course, in several respects resemble another arbour, and one beautiful woman another beautiful woman.

Among similes faulty through too great obviousness of the likeness, we must likewise rank those which are taken from objects become trite and familiar in poetical language. Such are the similes of a hero to a lion, of a person in sorrow to a flower drooping its head, of violent passion to a tempest, of chastity to snow, of virtue to the sun or the stars, and many more of this kind, with which we are sure to find modern writers, of second-rate genius, abounding plentifully; handed down from every writer of verses to another, as by hereditary right. These comparisons were, at first, perhaps, very proper for the purposes to which they are applied. In the ancient original poets, who took them directly from nature, not from their predecessors, they add beauty. But they are now beaten; our ears are so accustomed to them, that they give no amusement to the fancy. There is, indeed, no mark by

which we can more readily distinguish a poet of true genius, from one of a barren imagination, than by the strain of their comparisons. All who call themselves poets affect them: but, whereas a mere versifier copies no new image from nature, which appears, to his uninventive genius, exhausted by those who have gone before him, and, therefore, contents himself with humbly following their track; to an author of real fancy, nature seems to unlock, spontaneously, her hidden stores; and the eye, 'quick glancing from earth to heaven,' discovers new shapes and forms, new likenesses between objects unobserved before, which render his similes original, expressive, and lively.

But, in the second place, as comparisons ought not to be founded on likenesses too obvious, still less ought they to be founded on those which are too faint and remote. For these, in place of assisting, strain the fancy to comprehend them, and throw no light upon the subject. It is also to be observed, that a comparison, which, in the principal circumstances, carries a sufficiently near resemblance, may become unnatural and obscure, if pushed too far. Nothing is more opposite to the design of this figure than to hunt after a great number of coincidences in minute points, merely to shew how far the poet's wit can stretch the resemblance. This is Mr. Cowley's common fault; whose comparisons generally run out so far, as to become rather a studied exercise of wit, than an illustration of the principal object. We need only open his works, his odes especially, to find instances every where.

In the third place, the object from which a comparison is drawn, should never be an unknown object, or one of which few people can form clear ideas: 'Ad inferendam rebus lucem,' says Quinctilian, 'repertæ sunt similitudines. Præcipuè, igitur, est custodiendum ne id quod similitudinis gratiâ ascivimus, aut obscurum sit, aut ignotum. Debet enim id quod illustrandæ alterius rei gratiâ assumitur, ipsum esse clarius eo quod illuminatur.'* Comparisons, therefore, founded on philosophical discoveries, or on any thing with which persons of a certain trade only, or a certain profession, are conversant, attain not their proper effect. They should be taken from those illustrious, noted objects, which most of the readers either have seen, or can strongly conceive. This leads me to remark a fault of which modern poets are very apt to be guilty. The ancients took their similes from that face of nature, and that class of objects, with which they and their readers were acquainted Hence lions, and wolves, and serpents, were fruitful, and very pro-

* 'Comparisons have been introduced into discourse for the sake of throwing ligh on the subject. We must, therefore, be much on our guard, not to employ, as the ground of our simile, any object which is either obscure or unknown. That, surely which is used for the purpose of illustrating some other thing, ought to be more obvious and plain than the thing intended to be illustrated.'

per sources of similes amongst them; and these having become a sort of consecrated, classical images, are very commonly adopted by the moderns: injudiciously however, for the propriety of them is now in a great measure lost. It is only at second-hand, and by description, that we are acquainted with many of those objects; and to most readers of poetry, it were more to the purpose, to describe lions, or serpents, by similes taken from men, than to describe men by lions. Now-a-days, we can more easily form the conception of a fierce combat between two men, than between a bull and a tiger. Every country has a scenery peculiar to itself; and the imagery of every good poet will exhibit it. The introduction of unknown objects, or of a foreign scenery, betrays a poet copying, not after nature, but from other writers. I have only to observe farther,

In the fourth place, that, in compositions of a serious or elevated kind, similes should never be taken from low or mean objects. These are degrading; whereas, similes are commonly intended to embellish, and to dignify; and therefore, unless in burlesque writings, or where similes are introduced purposely to vilify and diminish an object, mean ideas should never be presented to us. Some of Homer's comparisons have been taxed, without reason, on this account. For it is to be remembered, that the meanness or dignity of objects depends, in a great degree, on the ideas and manners of the age wherein we live. Many similes, therefore, drawn from the incidents of rural life, which appear low to us, had abundance of dignity in those simpler ages of antiquity.

I have now considered such of the figures of speech as seemed most to merit a full and particular discussion: metaphor, hyberbole, personification, apostrophe, and comparison. A few more yet remain to be mentioned; the proper use and conduct of which will be easily understood from the principles already laid down.

As comparison is founded on the resemblance, so Antithesis on the contrast or opposition of two objects. Contrast has always this effect, to make each of the contrasted objects appear in the stronger light. White, for instance, never appears so bright as when it is opposed to black; and when both are viewed together. Antithesis, therefore, may, on many occasions, be employed to advantage, in order to strengthen the impression which we intend that any object should make. Thus Cicero, in his oration for Milo, representing the improbability of Milo's forming a design to take away the life of Clodius, at a time when all circumstances were unfavourable to such a design, and after he had let other opportunities slip, when he could have executed the same design, if he had formed it, with much more ease and safety, heightens our conviction of this improbability by a skilful use of this figure: 'Quem igitur cum omnium gratiâ interficere noluit, hunc voluit

cum aliquorum querelâ? Quem jure, quem loco, quem tempore, quem impune, non est ausus, hunc injuriâ, iniquo loco, alieno tempore, periculo capitis, non dubitavit occidere?'* In order to render an antithesis more complete, it is always of advantage, that the words and members of the sentence expressing the contrasted objects, be, as in this instance of Cicero's, similarly constructed, and made to correspond to each other. This leads us to remark the contrast more, by setting the things which we oppose more clearly over-against each other; in the same manner as when we contrast a black and a white object, in order to perceive the full difference of their colour, we would choose to have both objects of the same bulk, and placed in the same light. Their resemblance to each other, in certain circumstances, makes their disagreement in others more palpable.

At the same time, I must observe, that the frequent use of antithesis, especially where the opposition in the words is nice and quaint, is apt to render style disagreeable. Such a sentence as the following, from Seneca, does very well, where it stands alone: 'Si quem volueris esse divitem, non est quod augeas divitias, sed minuas cupiditates.'† Or this: 'Si ad naturam vives, nunquam eris pauper; si ad opinionem, nunquam dives.'‡ A maxim, or moral saying, properly enough receives this form; both because it is supposed to be the fruit of meditation, and because it is designed to be engraven on the memory, which recalls it more easily by the help of such contrasted expressions. But where a string of such sentences succeed each other; where this becomes an author's favourite and prevailing manner of expressing himself, his style is faulty: and it is upon this account Seneca has been often and justly censured. Such a style appears too studied and laboured; it gives us the impression of an author attending more to his manner of saying things, than to the things themselves which he says. Dr. Young, though a writer of real genius, was too fond of antithesis. In his Estimate of Human Life, we find whole passages that run in such a strain as this: 'The peasant complains aloud; the courtier in secret repines. In want, what distress; in affluence, what satiety? The great are under as much difficulty to expend with pleasure, as the mean to labour with success. The ignorant,

* 'Is it credible that, when he declined putting Clodius to death with the consent of all, he would choose to do it with the disapprobation of many? Can you believe that the person whom he scrupled to slay, when he might have done so with full justice, in a convenient place, at a proper time, with secure impunity, he made no scruple to murder against justice, in an unfavourable place, at an unseasonable time, and at the risk of capital condemnation?'

† 'If you seek to make one rich, study not to increase his stores, but to diminish his desires.'

‡ 'If you regulate your desires according to the standard of nature, you will never be poor; if according to the standard of opinion, you will never be rich.'

through ill-grounded hope, are disappointed; the knowing, through knowledge, despond. Ignorance occasions mistake; mistake, disappointment; and disappointment is misery. Knowledge, on the other hand, gives true judgment; and true judgment of human things, gives a demonstration of their insufficiency to our peace.' There is too much glitter in such a style as this to please long. We are fatigued, by attending to such quaint and artificial sentences often repeated.

There is another sort of antithesis, the beauty of which consists in surprising us by the unexpected contrast of things which it brings together. Much wit may be shewn in this; but it belongs wholly to pieces of professed wit and humour, and can find no place in grave compositions. Mr. Pope, who is remarkably fond of antithesis, is often happy in this use of the figure. So, in his Rape of the Lock:

> Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
> Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
> Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
> Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade;
> Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;
> Or whether Heaven has doom'd that Shock must fall.

What is called the point of an epigram, consists, for most part, in some antithesis of this kind; surprising us with the smart and unexpected turn which it gives to the thought; and in the fewer words it is brought out, it is always the happier.

Comparisons and antithesis are figures of a cool nature; the productions of imagination, not of passion. Interrogations and Exclamations, of which I am next to speak, are passionate figures. They are, indeed, on so many occasions, the native language of passion, that their use is extremely frequent; and, in ordinary conversation, when men are heated, they prevail as much as in the most sublime oratory. The unfigured, literal use of interrogation, is, to ask a question; but when men are prompted by passion, whatever they would affirm, or deny, with great vehemence, they naturally put in the form of a question; expressing thereby the strongest confidence of the truth of their own sentiment, and appealing to their hearers for the impossibility of the contrary. Thus, in Scripture: 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said it? and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken it? and shall he not make it good?'* So Demosthenes, addressing himself to the Athenians: 'Tell me, will you still go about and ask one another, what news? What can be more astonishing news than this, that the man of Macedon makes war upon the Athenians, and disposes of the affairs of Greece?—Is Philip dead? No, but he is sick. What

* Numbers, chap. xxiii. ver. 19.

signifies it to you whether he be dead or alive? For, if any thing happens to this Philip, you will immediately raise up another.' All this delivered without interrogation, had been faint and ineffectual; but the warmth and eagerness which this questioning method expresses, awakens the hearers, and strikes them with much greater force.

Interrogations may often be employed with propriety, in the course of no higher emotions than naturally arise in pursuing some close and earnest reasoning. But exclamations belong only to stronger emotions of the mind; to surprise, admiration, anger, joy, grief, and the like:

> Heu pietas! heu prisca fides! invictaque bello
> Dextera!

Both interrogation and exclamation, and, indeed, all passionate figures of speech, operate upon us by means of sympathy. Sympathy is a very powerful and extensive principle in our nature, disposing us to enter into every feeling and passion, which we behold expressed by others. Hence, a single person coming into company with strong marks, either of melancholy or joy, upon his countenance, will diffuse that passion, in a moment, through the whole circle. Hence, in a great crowd, passions are so easily caught, and so fast spread, by that powerful contagion which the animated looks, cries and gestures of a multitude never fail to carry. Now, interrogations and exclamations, being natural signs of a moved and agitated mind, always, when they are properly used, dispose us to sympathise with the dispositions of those who use them, and to feel as they feel.

From this it follows, that the great rule with regard to the conduct of such figures is, that the writer attend to the manner in which nature dictates to us to express any emotion or passion, and that he give his language that turn, and no other; above all, that he never affect the style of a passion which he does not feel. With interrogations he may use a good deal of freedom; these, as above observed, falling in so much with the ordinary course of language and reasoning, even when no great vehemence is supposed to have place in the mind. But, with respect to exclamations, he must be more reserved. Nothing has a worse effect than the frequent and unseasonable use of them. Raw juvenile writers imagine, that, by pouring them forth often, they render their compositions warm and animated. Whereas quite the contrary follows They render it frigid to excess. When an author is always calling upon us to enter into transports which he has said nothing to inspire, we are both disgusted and enraged at him. He raises no sympathy, for he gives us no passion of his own, in which we can take part. He gives us words, and not passion; and, of course, can raise no passion, unless that of indignation. Hence I am inclined to think, he was not much mistaken, who said, that when,

on looking into a book, he found the pages thick bespangled with the point which is called, 'Punctum admirationis,' he judged this to be a sufficient reason for his laying it aside. And indeed were it not for the help of this 'punctum admirationis,' with which many writers of the rapturous kind so much abound, one would be often at a loss to discover, whether or not it was exclamation which they aimed at For, it has now become a fashion, among these writers, to subjoin points of admiration to sentences, which contain nothing but simple affirmations, or propositions; as if, by an affected method of pointing, they could transform them in the reader's mind into high figures of eloquence. Much akin to this, is another contrivance practised by some writers, of separating almost all the members of their sentences from each other, by blank lines; as if, by setting them thus asunder, they bestowed some special importance upon them; and required us, in going along, to make a pause at every other word, and weigh it well. This, I think, may be called a Typographical Figure of Speech. Neither, indeed, since we have been led to mention the arts of writers for increasing the importance of their words, does another custom, which prevailed very much some time ago, seem worthy of imitation; I mean that of distinguishing the significant words, in every sentence, by Italic characters. On some occasions, it is very proper to use such distinctions. But when we carry them so far, as to mark with them every supposed emphatical word, these words are apt to multiply so fast in the author's imagination, that every page is crowded with Italics, which can produce no effect whatever, but to hurt the eye, and create confusion. Indeed, if the sense point not out the most emphatical expressions, a variation in the type, especially when occurring so frequently, will give small aid. And accordingly, the most masterly writers of late, have with good reason, laid aside all those feeble props of significancy, and trusted wholly to the weight of their sentiments for commanding attention. But to return from this digression:

Another figure of speech proper only to animated and warm composition, is what some critical writers call Vision; when, in place of relating something that is past, we use the present tense, and describe it as actually passing before our eyes. Thus Cicero, in his fourth oration against Catiline: 'Videor enim mihi hanc urbem videre, lucem orbis terrarum atque arcem omnium gentium, subito uno incendio concidentem; cerno animo sepultâ in patriâ miseros atque insepultos acervos civium; versatur mihi ante oculos aspectus Cethegi, et furor, in vestrâ cæde bacchantis.'* This manner

* 'I seem to myself to behold this city, the ornament of the earth, and the capital of all nations, suddenly involved in one conflagration. I see before me the slaughtered heaps of citizens lying unburied in the midst of their ruined country. The furious countenance of Cethegus rises to my view, while with a savage joy he is triumphing in your miseries.'

of description supposes a sort of enthusiasm, which carries the person who describes, in some measure, out of himself; and, when well executed, must needs impress the reader or hearer strongly, by the force of that sympathy which I have before explained. But, in order to a successful execution, it requires an uncommonly warm imagination, and such a happy selection of circumstances, as shall make us think we see before our eyes the scene that is described. Otherwise it shares the same fate with all feeble attempts towards passionate figures; that of throwing ridicule upon the author, and leaving the reader more cool and uninterested than he was before. The same observations are to be applied to repetition, suspension, correction, and many more of those figurative forms of speech, which rhetoricians have enumerated among the beauties of eloquence. They are beautiful, or not, exactly in proportion as they are native expressions of the sentiment or passion intended to be heightened by them. Let nature and passion always speak their own language, and they will suggest figures in abundance. But, when we seek to counterfeit a warmth which we do not feel, no figures will either supply the defect, or conceal the imposture.

There is one figure (and I shall mention no more) of frequent use among all public speakers, particularly at the bar, which Quinctilian insists upon considerably, and calls Amplification. It consists in an artful exaggeration of all the circumstances of some object or action which we want to place in a strong light, either a good or a bad one. It is not so properly one figure, as the skilful management of several which we make to tend to one point. It may be carried on by a proper use of magnifying or extenuating terms, by a regular enumeration of particulars, or by throwing together, as into one mass, a crowd of circumstances; by suggesting comparisons also with things of a like nature. But the principal instrument by which it works, is by a climax, or a gradual rise of one circumstance above another, till our idea be raised to the utmost. I spoke formerly of a climax in sound; a climax in sense, when well carried on, is a figure which never fails to amplify strongly. The common example of this is, that noted passage in Cicero, which every schoolboy knows: 'Facinus est vincere civem Romanum: scelus verberare; prope parricidium, necare; quid dicam in crucem tollere?'* I shall give an instance from a printed pleading of a famous Scotch lawyer, Sir George M'Kenzie. It is in a charge to the jury, in the case of a woman accused of murdering her own child. 'Gentlemen, if one man had any how slain another, if an adversary had killed his opposer, or a woman occasioned the

* 'It is a crime to put a Roman citizen in bonds; it is the height of guilt to scourge him; little less than parricide to put him to death: what name then shall I give to crucifying him?'

death of her enemy, even these criminals would have been capitally punished by the Cornelian law: but, if this guiltless infant, who could make no enemy, had been murdered by its own nurse, what punishments would not then the mother have demanded? With what cries and exclamations would she have stunned your ears? What shall we say then, when a woman, guilty of homicide, a mother of the murder of her innocent child, hath comprised all those misdeeds in one single crime; a crime, in its own nature detestable; in a woman, prodigious; in a mother, incredible; and perpetrated against one whose age called for compassion, whose near relation claimed affection, and whose innocence deserved the highest favour?' I must take notice, however, that such regular climaxes as these, though they have considerable beauty, have, at the same time, no small appearance of art and study; and, therefore, though they may be admitted into formal harangues, yet they speak not the language of great earnestness and passion, which seldom proceed by steps so regular. Nor, indeed, for the purposes of effectual persuasion, are they likely to be so successful, as an arrangement of circumstances in a less artificial order. For, when much art appears, we are always put on our guard against the deceits of eloquence; but when a speaker has reasoned strongly, and, by force of argument, has made good his main point, he may then, taking advantage of the favourable bent of our minds, make use of such artificial figures to confirm our belief, and to warm our minds.

LECTURE XVIII.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE---GENERAL CHARACTERS OF STYLE---DIFFUSE, CONCISE---FEEBLE, NERVOUS---DRY, PLAIN, NEAT, ELEGANT, FLOWERY

Having treated, at considerable length, of the figures of speech, of their origin, of their nature, and of the management of such of them as are important enough to require a particular discussion, before finally dismissing this subject, I think it incumbent on me to make some observations concerning the proper use of figurative language in general. These, indeed, I have, in part, already anticipated. But, as great errors are often committed in this part of style, especially by young writers, it may be of use that I bring together, under one view, the most material directions on this head.

I begin with repeating an observation, formerly made, that neither all the beauties, nor even the chief beauties of composition, depend upon tropes and figures. Some of the most sublime and most pathetic passages of the most admired authors, both in prose

and poetry, are expressed in the most simple style, without any figure at all; instances of which I have before given. On the other hand, a composition may abound with these studied ornaments; the language may be artful, splendid, and highly figured, and yet the composition be on the whole frigid and unaffecting Not to speak of sentiment and thought, which constitute the real and lasting merit of any work, if the style be stiff and affected, if it be deficient in perspicuity or precision, or in ease and neatness, all the figures that can be employed will never render it agreeable; they may dazzle a vulgar, but will never please a judicious eye.

In the second place, figures, in order to be beautiful, must always rise naturally from the subject. I have shewn that all of them are the language either of imagination, or of passion; some of them suggested by imagination, when it is awakened and sprightly, such as metaphors and comparisons; others by passion or more heated emotion, such as personifications and apostrophes. Of course they are beautiful then only, when they are prompted by fancy, or by passion. They must rise of their own accord; they must flow from a mind warmed by the object which it seeks to describe; we should never interrupt the course of thought to cast about for figures. If they be sought after coolly, and fastened on as designed ornaments, they will have a miserable effect. It is a very erroneous idea, which many have of the ornaments of style, as if they were things detached from the subject, and that could be stuck to it like lace upon a coat; this is, indeed,

Purpureus late qui splendeat unus et alter
Assuitur pannus.*——— ARS POET.

And it is this false idea which has often brought attention to the beauties of writing into disrepute. Whereas the real and proper ornaments of style arise from sentiment. They flow in the same stream with the current of thought. A writer of genius conceives his subject strongly; his imagination is filled and impressed with it; and pours itself forth in that figurative language which imagination naturally speaks. He puts on no emotion which his subject does not raise in him; he speaks as he feels; but his style will be beautiful, because his feelings are lively. On occasions, when fancy is languid, or finds nothing to rouse it, we should never attempt to hunt for figures. We then work, as it is said, 'invitâ Minervâ;' supposing figures invented, they will have the appearance of being forced; and in this case, they had much better be omitted.

In the third place, even when imagination prompts, and the sub-

* 'Shreds of purple with broad lustre shine,
Sew'd on your poem.' FRANCIS.

ject naturally gives rise to figures, they must, however, not be employed too frequently. In all beauty, 'simplex munditiis' is a capital quality. Nothing derogates more from the weight and dignity of any composition, than too great attention to ornament. When the ornaments cost labour, that labour always appears; though they should cost us none, still the reader or hearer may be surfeited with them; and when they come too thick, they give the impression of a light and frothy genius, that evaporates in show rather than brings forth what is solid. The directions of the ancient critics, on this head, are full of good sense, and deserve careful attention. 'Voluptatibus maximis,' says Cicero, de Orat. l. iii. 'fastidium finitimum est in rebus omnibus quo hoc minus in oratione miremur. In qua vel ex poëtis, vel oratoribus possumus judicare, concinnam, ornatam, festivam sine intermissione, quamvis claris sit coloribus picta, vel poësis, vel oratio, non posse in delectatione esse diuturnâ. Quare, bene et prœclare, quamvis nobis sæpe dicatur, belle et festive nimium sæpe nolo.'* To the same purpose, are the excellent directions, with which Quinctilian concludes his discourse concerning figures, l. ix. c. 3. 'Ego illud de iis figuris quæ veræ fiunt, adjiciam breviter, sicut ornant orationem opportunæ positæ, ita ineptissimas esse cum immodice petuntur. Sunt, qui neglecto rerum pondere et viribus sententiarum, si vel inania verba in hos modos depravarunt, summos se judicant artifices; ideoque non desinunt eas nectere; quas sine sententia sectare, tam est ridiculum quam quærere habitum gestumque sine corpore. Ne hæ quidem quæ rectæ fiunt, densandæ sunt nimis. Sciendum imprimis quid quisque postulet locus, quid persona, quid tempus. Major enim pars harum figurarum posita est in delectatione. Ubi veró, atrocitate, invidiá, miseratione pugnandum est; quis ferat verbis contrapositis, et consimilibus, et pariter cadentibus, irascentem, flentem, rogantem? Cum in his rebus, cura verborum deroget affectibus fidem; et ubicunque ars ostentatur, veritas abesse videatur.'* After these judi-

* 'In all human things disgust borders so nearly on the most lively pleasures, tha. we need not be surprised to find this hold in eloquence. From reading either poets or orators we may easily satisfy ourselves, that neither a poem nor an oration, which, without intermission, is showy and sparkling, can please us long.—Wherefore, though we may wish for the frequent praise of having expressed ourselves well and properly we should not covet repeated applause, for being bright and splendid.'

† 'I must add concerning those figures which are proper in themselves, that as they beautify a composition when they are seasonably introduced, so they deform it greatly if too frequently sought after. There are some, who, neglecting strength of sentiment and weight of matter, if they can only force their empty words into a figurative style, imagine themselves great writers; and therefore continually string together such ornaments; which is just as ridiculous, where there is no sentiment to support them, as to contrive gestures and dresses for what wants a body. Even those figures which a subject admits, must not come too thick. We must begin with considering what the occasion, the time, and the person who speaks, render proper. For the object aimed at by the greater part of these figures is entertainment. But when the

cious and useful observations, I have no more to add on this subject, except this admonition.

In the fourth place, that without a genius for figurative language none should attempt it. Imagination is a power not to be acquired; it must be derived from nature. Its redundancies we may prune, its deviations we may correct, its sphere we may enlarge; but the faculty itself we cannot create; and all efforts towards a metaphorical ornamented style, if we are destitute of the proper genius for it, will prove awkward and disgusting. Let us satisfy ourselves, however, by considering that without this talent, or at least with a very small measure of it, we may both write and speak to advantage. Good sense, clear ideas, perspicuity of language, and proper arrangement of words and thoughts, will always command attention. These are indeed the foundations of all solid merit, both in speaking and writing. Many subjects require nothing more: and those which admit of ornament, admit it only as a secondary requisite. To study and to know our own genius well; to follow nature; to seek to improve, but not to force it; are directions which cannot be too often given to those who desire to excel in the liberal arts.

When I entered on the consideration of style, I observed that words being the copies of our ideas, there must always be a very intimate connexion between the manner in which every writer employs words, and his manner of thinking; and that, from the peculiarity of thought and expression which belongs to him, there is a certain character imprinted on his style, which may be denominated his manner; commonly expressed by such general terms, as strong, weak, dry, simple, affected, or the like. These distinctions carry, in general, some reference to an author's manner of thinking, but refer chiefly to his mode of expression. They arise from the whole tenour of his language; and comprehend the effect produced by all those parts of style which we have already considered; the choice which he makes of single words; his arrangement of these in sentences; the degree of his precision; and his embellishment, by means of musical cadence, figures, or other arts of speech. Of such general characters of style, therefore, it remains now to speak, as the result of those underparts of which I have hitherto treated.

That different subjects require to be treated of in different sorts of style, is a position so obvious, that I shall not stay to illustrate it. Every one sees that treatises of philosophy, for instance, ought not to be composed in the same style with orations. Every

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subject becomes deeply serious, and strong passions are to be moved, who can bear the orator, who, in affected language and balanced phrases, endeavours to express wrath, commiseration, or earnest entreaty? On all such occasions, a solicitous attention to words weakens passion; and when so much art is shewn, there is suspected to be little sincerity.'

one sees also, that different parts of the same composition require a variation in the style and manner. In a sermon, for instance, or any harangue, the application or peroration admits more ornament, and requires more warmth, than the didactic part. But what I mean at present to remark is, that, amidst this variety, we still expect to find, in the compositions of any one man, some degree of uniformity or consistency with himself in manner; we expect to find some predominant character of style impressed on all his writings, which shall be suited to, and shall mark, his particular genius and turn of mind. The orations in Livy differ much in style, as they ought to do, from the rest of his history. The same is the case with those in Tacitus. Yet both in Livy's orations, and in those of Tacitus, we are able clearly to trace the distinguishing manner of each historian; the magnificent fulness of the one, and the sententious conciseness of the other. The 'Lettres Persanes,' and 'L'Esprit des Loix,' are the works of the same author. They required very different composition surely, and accordingly they differ widely; yet still we see the same hand. Wherever there is real and native genius, it gives a determination to one kind of style rather than another. Where nothing of this appears; where there is no marked nor peculiar character in the compositions of any author, we are apt to infer, not without reason, that he is a vulgar and trivial author, who writes from imitation, and not from the impulse of original genius. As the most celebrated painters are known by their hand, so the best and most original writers are known and distinguished throughout all their works, by their style and peculiar manner. This will be found to hold almost without exception.

The ancient critics attended to these General Characters of Style which we are now to consider. Dionysius of Halicarnassus divides them into three kinds, and calls them the Austere, the Florid, and the Middle. By the Austere he means a style distinguished for strength and firmness, with a neglect of smoothness and ornament, for examples of which he gives Pindar and Æschylus among the poets, and Thucydides among the prose-writers. By the Florid he means, as the name indicates, a style ornamented, flowing, and sweet; resting more upon numbers and grace than strength; he instances Hesiod, Sappho, Anacreon, Euripides, and principally Isocrates. The Middle kind is the just mean between these, and comprehends the beauties of both: in which class he places Homer and Sophocles among the poets; in prose, Herodotus, Demosthenes, Plato, and (what seems strange) Aristotle. This must be a very wide class indeed, which comprehends Plato and Aristotle under one article as to style.* Cicero and Quinctilian make also a threefold division of style, though with respect to different qualities of it; in which they

* De Compositione Verborum, cap. 25.

are followed by most of the modern writers on rhetoric; the ***Simplex, Tenue,*** or ***Subtile;*** the ***Grave*** or ***Vehemens;*** and the ***Medium,*** or ***temperatum genus dicendi.*** But these divisions, and the illustrations they give of them, are so loose and general, that they cannot advance us much in our ideas of style. I shall endeavour to be a little more particular in what I have to say on this subject.

One of the first and most obvious distinctions of the different kinds of style, is what arises from an author's spreading out his thoughts more or less. This distinction forms, what are called, the Diffuse and the Concise styles. A concise writer compresses his thoughts into the fewest possible words; he seeks to employ none but such as are most expressive; he lops off, as redundant, every expression which does not add something material to the sense. Ornament he does not reject; he may be lively and figured; but his ornament is intended for the sake of force rather than grace. He never gives you the same thought twice. He places it in the light which appears to him the most striking; but if you do not apprehend it well in that light, you need not expect to find it in any other. His sentences are arranged with compactness and strength, rather than with cadence and harmony. The utmost precision is studied in them; and they are commonly designed to suggest more to the reader's imagination than they directly express.

A diffuse writer unfolds his thought fully. He places it in a variety of lights, and gives the reader every possible assistance for understanding it completely. He is not very careful to express it at first in its full strength; because he is to repeat the impression; and what he wants in strength he proposes to supply by copiousness. Writers of this character generally love magnificence and amplification. Their periods naturally run out into some length, and having room for ornament of every kind, they admit it freely.

Each of these manners has its peculiar advantages; and each becomes faulty when carried to the extreme. The extreme of conciseness becomes abrupt and obscure; it is apt also to lead into a style too pointed, and bordering on the epigrammatic. The extreme of diffuseness becomes weak and languid, and tires the reader. However, to one or other of these two manners, a writer may lean according as his genius prompts him: and under the general character of a concise, or of a more open and diffuse style, may possess much beauty in his composition.

For illustrations of these general characters, I can only refer to the writers who are examples of them. It is not so much from detached passages, such as I was wont formerly to quote for instances, as from the current of an author's style, that we are to collect the idea of a formed manner of writing. The two most

remarkable examples that I know of conciseness carried as far as propriety will allow, perhaps in some cases farther, are Tacitus the historian, and the president Montesquieu in 'L'Esprit des Loix.' Aristotle too holds an eminent rank among didactic writers for his brevity. Perhaps no writer in the world was ever so frugal of his words as Aristotle; but this frugality of expression frequently darkens his meaning. Of a beautiful and magnificent diffuseness, Cicero is, beyond doubt, the most illustrious instance that can be given. Addison also, and Sir William Temple, come in some degree under this class.

In judging when it is proper to lean to the concise, and when to the diffuse manner, we must be directed by the nature of the composition. Discourses that are to be spoken require a more copious style than books that are to be read. When the whole meaning must be catched from the mouth of the speaker, without the advantage which books afford of pausing at pleasure, and reviewing what appears obscure, great conciseness is always to be avoided. We should never presume too much on the quickness of our hearer's understanding; but our style ought to be such, that the bulk of men can go along with us easily, and without effort. A flowing copious style, therefore, is required in all public speakers; guarding, at the same time, against such a degree of diffusion as renders them languid and tiresome; which will always prove the case, when they inculcate too much, and present the same thought under too many different views.

In written compositions, a certain degree of conciseness possesses great advantages. It is more lively; keeps up attention; makes a brisker and stronger impression; and gratifies the mind by supplying more exercise to a reader's own thought. A sentiment, which, expressed diffusely, will barely be admitted to be just, expressed concisely, will be admired as spirited. Description, when we want to have it vivid and animated, should be in a concise strain. This is different from the common opinion; most persons being ready to suppose, that upon description a writer may dwell more safely than upon other things, and that, by a full and extended style, it is rendered more rich and expressive. I apprehend, on the contrary, that a diffuse manner generally weakens it. Any redundant words or circumstances encumber the fancy, and make the object we present to it, appear confused and indistinct. Accordingly, the most masterly describers, Homer, Tacitus, Milton, are almost always concise in their descriptions. They shew us more of an object at one glance, than a feeble diffuse writer can shew, by turning it round and round in a variety of lights. The strength and vivacity of description, whether in prose or poetry, depend much more upon the happy choice of one or two striking circumstances, than upon the multiplication of them.

Addresses to the passions, likewise, ought to be in the concise, rather than the diffuse manner. In these, it is dangerous to be diffuse, because it is very difficult to support proper warmth for any length of time. When we become prolix, we are always in hazard of cooling the reader. The heart too, and the fancy, run fast; and if once we can put them in motion, they supply many particulars to greater advantage than an author can display them. The case is different, when we address ourselves to the understanding: as in all matters of reasoning, explication, and instruction. There I would prefer a more free and diffuse manner. When you are to strike the fancy, or to move the heart, be concise; when you are to inform the understanding, which moves more slowly, and requires the assistance of a guide, it is better to be full. Historical narration may be beautiful, either in a concise or a diffuse manner, according to the writer's genius. Livy and Herodotus are diffuse; Thucydides and Sallust are succinct; yet all of them are agreeable.

I observe that a diffuse style generally abounds in long periods; and a concise writer, it is certain, will often employ short sentences. It is not, however, to be inferred from this, that long or short sentences are fully characteristical of the one or the other manner. It is very possible for one to compose always in short sentences, and to be withal extremely diffuse, if a small measure of sentiment be spread through many of these sentences. Seneca is a remarkable example. By the shortness and quaintness of his sentences, he may appear at first view very concise; yet he is far from being so. He transfigures the same thought into many different forms. He makes it pass for a new one, only by giving it a new turn. So, also, most of the French writers compose in short sentences; though their style, in general, is not concise; commonly less so than the bulk of English writers, whose sentences are much longer. A French author breaks down into two or three sentences, that portion of thought which an English author crowds into one. The direct effect of short sentences, is to render the style brisk and lively, but not always concise. By the quick successive impulses which they make on the mind, they keep it awake; and give to composition more of a spirited character. Long periods, like Lord Clarendon's, are grave and stately; but, like all grave things, they are in hazard of becoming dull. An intermixture of both long and short ones is requisite, when we would support solemnity, together with vivacity; leaning, more to the one or the other, according as propriety requires that the solemn or the sprightly should be predominant in our composition. But of long and short sentences, I had occasion, formerly, to treat, under the head of the Construction of Periods.

The Nervous and the Feeble are generally held to be characters

of style, of the same import with the concise and the diffuse. They do indeed very often coincide. Diffuse writers have, for the most part, some degree of feebleness; and nervous writers will generally be inclined to a concise expression. This, however, does not always hold; and there are instances of writers, who, in the midst of a full and ample style, have maintained a great degree of strength. Livy is an example; and in the English language, Dr. Barrow. Barrow's style has many faults. It is unequal, incorrect, and redundant, but withal, for force and expressiveness, uncommonly distinguished. On every subject, he multiplies words with an overflowing copiousness; but it is always a torrent of strong ideas and significant expressions which he pours forth. Indeed, the foundations of a nervous or a weak style are laid in an author's manner of thinking. If he conceives an object strongly, he will express it with energy: but if he has only an indistinct view of his subject; if his ideas be loose and wavering; if his genius be such, or, at the time of his writing, so carelessly exerted, that he has no firm hold of the conception which he would communicate to us, the marks of all this will clearly appear in his style. Several unmeaning words and loose epithets will be found; his expressions will be vague and general; his arrangement indistinct and feeble; we shall conceive somewhat of his meaning, but our conception will be faint. Whereas a nervous writer, whether he employs an extended or a concise style, gives us always a strong impression of his meaning: his mind is full of his subject, and his words are all expressive: every phrase and every figure which he uses, tends to render the picture, which he would set before us, more lively and complete.

I observed, under the head of diffuse and concise style, that an author might lean either to the one or to the other, and yet be beautiful. This is not the case with respect to the nervous and the feeble. Every author, in every composition, ought to study to express himself with some strength, and in proportion as he approaches to the feeble, he becomes a bad writer. In all kinds of writing, however, the same degree of strength is not demanded. But the more grave and weighty any composition is, the more should a character of strength predominate in the style. Hence in history, philosophy, and solemn discourses, it is expected most. One of the most complete models of a nervous style, is Demosthenes in his orations.

As every good quality in style has an extreme, when pursued to which it becomes faulty, this holds of the nervous style as well as others. Too great a study of strength, to the neglect of the other qualities of style, is found to betray writers into a harsh manner. Harshness arises from unusual words, from forced inversions in the construction of a sentence, and too much neglect of smoothness and ease. This is reckoned the fault of some of our

earliest classics in the English language; such as Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Bacon, Hooker, Chillingworth, Milton in his prose works, Harrington, Cudworth, and other writers of considerable note in the days of Queen Elizabeth, James I. and Charles I. These writers had nerves and strength in a high degree, and are to this day eminent for that quality in style. But the language in their hands was exceedingly different from what it is now, and was indeed entirely formed upon the idiom and construction of the Latin in the arrangement of sentences. Hooker, for instance, begins the preface to his celebrated work of Ecclesiastical Polity, with the following sentence: 'Though for no other cause, yet for this, that posterity may know we have not loosely, through silence, permitted things to pass away as in dream, there shall be, for men's information, extant this much concerning the present state of the church of God established amongst us, and their careful endeavours which would have upheld the same.' Such a sentence now sounds harsh in our ears. Yet some advantages certainly attended this sort of style; and whether we have gained, or lost, upon the whole, by departing from it, may bear a question. By the freedom of arrangement, which it permitted, it rendered the language susceptible of more strength, of more variety of collocation, and more harmony of period. But however this be, such a style is now obsolete; and no modern writer could adopt it without the censure of harshness and affectation. The present form which the language has assumed, has, in some measure, sacrificed the study of strength to that of perspicuity and ease. Our arrangement of words has become less forcible, perhaps, but more plain and natural: and this is now understood to be the genius of our language.

The restoration of King Charles II. seems to be the era of the formation of our present style. Lord Clarendon was one of the first who laid aside those frequent inversions which prevailed among writers of the former age. After him, Sir William Temple polished the language still more. But the author, who, by the number and reputation of his works, formed it more than any one, into its present state, is Dryden. Dryden began to write at the Restoration, and continued long an author both in poetry and prose. He had made the language his study;* and though he wrote hastily, and often incorrectly, and his style is not free from faults, yet there is a richness in his diction, a copiousness, ease, and

* Dr. Johnson, in his life of Dryden, gives the following character of his prose style: 'His prefaces have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid, the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; what is great, is splendid. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though, since his earlier works, more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.'

variety in his expression, which has not been surpassed by any who have come after him. Since his time, considerable attention has been paid to purity and elegance of style; but it is elegance rather than strength, that forms the distinguishing quality of most of the good English writers. Some of them compose in a more manly and nervous manner than others; but, whether it be from the genius of our language, or from whatever other cause, it appears to me, that we are far from the strength of several of the Greek and Roman authors.

Hitherto we have considered style under those characters that respect its expressiveness of an author's meaning. Let us now proceed to consider it in another view, with respect to the degree of ornament employed to beautify it. Here, the style of different authors seems to rise, in the following gradation: a Dry, a Plain, a Neat, an Elegant, a Flowery manner. Of each of these in their order.

First, a Dry manner. This excludes all ornament of every kind. Content with being understood, it has not the least aim to please, either the fancy or the ear. This is tolerable only in pure didactic writing; and even there, to make us bear it, great weight and solidity of matter is requisite; and entire perspicuity of language. Aristotle is the complete example of a dry style. Never, perhaps, was there any author who adhered so rigidly, to the strictness of a didactic manner throughout all his writings, and conveyed so much instruction, without the least approach to ornament. With the most profound genius and extensive views, he writes like a pure intelligence, who addresses himself solely to the understanding, without making any use of the channel of the imagination. But this is a manner which deserves not to be imitated. For, although the goodness of the matter may compensate the dryness or harshness of the style, yet is that dryness a considerable defect; as it fatigues attention, and conveys our sentiments, with disadvantage, to the reader or hearer.

A Plain style rises one degree above a dry one. A writer of this character employs very little ornament of any kind, and rests almost entirely upon his sense. But, if he is at no pains to engage us by the employment of figures, musical arrangement, or any other art of writing, he studies, however, to avoid disgusting us like a dry and a harsh writer. Besides perspicuity, he pursues propriety, purity, and precision, in his language; which form one degree, and no inconsiderable one, of beauty. Liveliness too, and force, may be consistent with a very plain style: and therefore, such an author, if his sentiments be good, may be abundantly agreeable. The difference between a dry and plain writer, is, that the former is incapable of ornament, and seems not to know what it is; the latter seeks not after it. He gives us his meaning in

good language, distinct and pure; any farther ornament he gives himself no trouble about; either, because he thinks it unnecessary to his subject; or because his genius does not lead him to delight in it; or, because it leads him to despise it.*

This last was the case with Dean Swift, who may be placed at the head of those that have employed the plain style. Few writers have discovered more capacity. He treats every subject which he handles, whether serious or ludicrous, in a masterly manner. He knew, almost beyond any man, the purity, the extent, the precision of the English language; and therefore, to such as wish to attain a pure and correct style, he is one of the most useful models. But we must not look for much ornament and grace in his language. His haughty and morose genius made him despise any embellishment of this kind as beneath his dignity. He delivers his sentiments in a plain, downright, positive manner, like one who is sure he is in the right; and is very indifferent whether you be pleased or not. His sentences are commonly negligently arranged; distinctly enough as to the sense; but without any regard to smoothness of sound; often without much regard to compactness or elegance. If a metaphor, or any other figure, chanced to render his satire more poignant, he would, perhaps, vouchsafe to adopt it, when it came in his way; but if it tended only to embellish and illustrate, he would rather throw it aside. Hence, in his serious pieces, his style often borders upon the dry and unpleasing; in his humorous ones, the plainness of his manner sets off his wit to the highest advantage. There is no froth nor affectation in it; it seems native and unstudied; and while he hardly appears to smile himself, he makes his reader laugh heartily. To a writer of such a genius as Dean Swift, the plain style was most admirably fitted. Among our philosophical writers, Mr. Locke comes under this class; perspicuous and pure, but almost without any ornament whatever. In works which admit or require ever so much ornament, there are parts where the plain manner ought to predominate. But we must remember, that when this is the character which a writer affects throughout his whole composition, great weight of matter, and great force of sentiment, are required, in order to keep up the reader's attention, and prevent him from becoming tired of the author.

What is called a Neat Style comes next in order; and here we are got into the region of ornament; but that ornament not of the highest or most sparkling kind. A writer of this character shews, that

* On this head, of the general characters of style, particularly the plain and the simple, and the characters of those English authors who are classed under them, in this and the following Lecture, several ideas have been taken from a manuscript treatise on rhetoric, part of which was shewn to me many years ago, by the learned and ingenious author, Dr. Adam Smith; and which, it is hoped, will be given by him to the public.

he does not despise the beauty of language. It is an object of his attention. But his attention is shewn in the choice of words, and in a graceful collocation of them; rather than in any high efforts of imagination, or eloquence. His sentences are always clean, and free from the incumbrance of superfluous words; of a moderate length; rather inclining to brevity, than a swelling structure; closing with propriety; without any tails, or adjections dragging after the proper close. His cadence is varied; but not of the studied musical kind. His figures, if he uses any, are short and correct; rather than bold and glowing. Such a style as this may be attained by a writer who has no great powers of fancy or genius; by industry merely, and careful attention to the rules of writing, and it is a style always agreeable. It imprints a character of moderate elevation on our composition, and carries a decent degree of ornament, which is not unsuitable to any subject whatever. A familiar letter, or a law paper, on the driest subject, may be written with neatness; and a sermon or a philosophical treatise, in a neat style, will be read with pleasure.

An Elegant Style is a character expressing a higher degree of ornament than a neat one; and, indeed, is the term usually applied to style, when possessing all the virtues of ornament, without any of its excesses or defects. From what has been formerly delivered, it will easily be understood, that complete elegance implies great perspicuity and propriety, purity in the choice of words, and care and dexterity in their harmonies and happy arrangement. It implies, farther, the grace and beauty of imagination spread over style, as far as the subject admits it; and all the illustration which figurative language adds, when properly employed. In a word, an elegant writer is one who pleases the fancy and the ear, while he informs the understanding; and who gives us his ideas clothed with all the beauty of expression, but not overcharged with any of its misplaced finery. In this class, therefore, we place only the first-rate writers in the language; such as Addison, Dryden, Pope, Temple, Bolingbroke, Atterbury, and a few more: writers who differ widely from one another in many of the attributes of style, but whom we now class together under the denomination of elegant, as, in the scale of ornament, possessing nearly the same place.

When the ornaments applied to a style, are too rich and gaudy in proportion to the subject; when they return upon us too fast, and strike us either with a dazzling lustre, or a false brilliancy, this forms what is called a Florid Style; a term commonly used to signify the excess of ornament. In a young composer this is very pardonable. Perhaps it is even a promising symptom in young people, that their style should incline to the florid and luxuriant: 'Volo se efferat in adolescente fœcunditas,' says Quinctilian, 'multum inde decoquent anni, multum ratio limabit, aliquid velut usu ipso dete-

retur; sit modo unde excidi possit quid et exsculpi.—Audeat hæc ætas plura, et inveniat et inventis gaudeat; sint licet illa non satis interim sicca et severa. Facile remedium est ubertatis: sterilia nullo labore vincuntur.'* But, although the florid style may be allowed to youth, in their first essays, it must not receive the same indulgence from writers of maturer years. It is to be expected, that judgment, as it ripens, should chasten imagination, and reject, as juvenile, all such ornaments as are redundant, unsuitable to the subject, or not conducive to illustrate it. Nothing can be more contemptible than that tinsel splendour of language, which some writers perpetually affect. It were well, if this could be ascribed to the real overflowing of a rich imagination. We should then have something to amuse us, at least, if we found little to instruct us. But the worst is, that with those frothy writers, it is a luxuriancy of words, not of fancy. We see a laboured attempt to rise to a splendour of composition, of which they have formed to themselves some loose idea; but having no strength of genius for attaining it, they endeavour to supply the defect by poetical words, by cold exclamations, by common-place figures, and every thing that has the appearance of pomp and magnificence. It has escaped these writers, that sobriety in ornament is one great secret for rendering it pleasing; and that, without a foundation of good sense and solid thought, the most florid style is but a childish imposition on the public. The public, however, are but too apt to be so imposed on; at least the mob of readers, who are very ready to be caught, at first, with whatever is dazzling and gaudy.

I cannot help thinking, that it reflects more honour on the religious turn, and good dispositions of the present age, than on the public taste, that Mr. Harvey's Meditations have had so great a currency. The pious and benevolent heart, which is always displayed in them, and the lively fancy, which, on some occasions, appears, justly merited applause; but the perpetual glitter of expression, the swoln imagery, and strained description, which abound in them, are ornaments of a false kind. I would, therefore, advise students of oratory to imitate Mr. Harvey's piety rather than his style; and, in all compositions of a serious kind, to turn their attention, as Mr. Pope says, 'from sounds to things, from fancy to the heart.' Admonitions of this kind I have already had occasion to give, and may hereafter repeat them; as I conceive nothing more incumbent on me in this course of Lectures, than to take every opportunity of

* 'In youth, I wish to see luxuriancy of fancy appear. Much of it will be diminished by years; much will be corrected by ripening judgment; some of it, by the mere practice of composition, will be worn away. Let there be only sufficient matter, at first, that can bear some pruning and lopping off. At this time of life, let genius be bold and inventive, and pride itself in its efforts, though these should not, as yet, be correct. Luxuriancy can easily be cured; but for barrenness there is no remedy.'

cautioning my readers against the affected and frivolous use of ornament; and, instead of that slight and superficial taste in writing, which I apprehend to be at present too fashionable, to introduce, as far as my endeavours can avail, a taste for more solid thought, and more manly simplicity in style.

LECTURE XIX.

GENERAL CHARACTERS OF STYLE.--SIMPLE, AFFECTED, VEHEMENT. --DIRECTIONS FOR FORMING A PROPER STYLE.

Having entered, in the last Lecture, on the consideration of the general characters of style, I treated of the concise and diffuse, the nervous and feeble manner. I considered style, also, with relation to the different degrees of ornament employed to beautify it; in which view, the manner of different authors rises according to the following gradation: Dry, Plain, Neat, Elegant, Flowery.

I am next to treat of style under another character, one of great importance in writing, and which requires to be accurately examined; that of Simplicity, or a natural style, as distinguished from Affectation. Simplicity, applied to writing, is a term very frequently used; but like many other critical terms, often used loosely and without precision. This has been owing chiefly to the different meanings given to the word simplicity, which, therefore, it will be necessary here to distinguish; and to shew in what sense it is a proper attribute of style. We may remark four different acceptations in which it is taken.

The first is, Simplicity in Composition, as opposed to too great a variety of parts. Horace's precept refers to this:

Denique sit quod vis simplex duntaxat et unum.*

This is the simplicity of plan in a tragedy, as distinguished from double plots, and crowded incidents; the simplicity of the Iliad, or Æneid, in opposition to the digressions of Lucan, and the scattered tales of Ariosto; the simplicity of Grecian architecture, in opposition to the irregular variety of the Gothic. In this sense, simplicity is the same with unity.

The second sense is, Simplicity of Thought, as opposed to refinement. Simple thoughts are what arise naturally: what the occasion or the subject suggests unsought; and what, when once suggested, are easily apprehended by all. Refinement in writing, expresses a less natural and obvious train of thought, and which it required a peculiar turn of genius to pursue; within certain bounds

* 'Then learn the wand'ring humour to control
And keep one equal tenor through the whole.—Francis.

very beautiful; but when carried too far, approaching to intricacy, and hurting us by the appearance of being '*recherché*,' or far-sought. Thus, we would naturally say, that Mr. Parnell is a poet of far greater simplicity, in his turn of thought, than Mr. Cowley; Cicero's thoughts on moral subjects are natural; Seneca's too refined and laboured. In these two senses of simplicity, when it is opposed, either to variety of parts, or to refinement of thought, it has no proper relation to style.

There is a third sense of simplicity, in which it has respect to style; and stands opposed to too much ornament, or pomp of language; as when we say Mr. Locke is a simple, Mr. Harvey a florid writer; and it is in this sense, that the '*simplex*,' the '*tenue*,' or '*subtile genus dicendi*,' is understood by Cicero and Quinctilian. The simple style, in this sense, coincides with the plain or the neat style, which I before mentioned; and, therefore, requires no farther illustration.

But there is a fourth sense of simplicity, also respecting style; but not respecting the degree of ornament employed, so much as the easy and natural manner in which our language expresses our thoughts. This is quite different from the former sense of the word just now mentioned, in which simplicity was equivalent to plainness; whereas, in this sense, it is compatible with the highest ornament. Homer, for instance, possesses this simplicity in the greatest perfection; and yet no writer has more ornament and beauty. This simplicity, which is what we are now to consider, stands opposed, not to ornament, but to affectation of ornament, or appearance of labour about our style; and it is a distinguishing excellency in writing.

A writer of simplicity expresses himself in such a manner, that every one thinks he could have written in the same way; Horace describes it,

> ——— ut sibi quivis
> Speret idem, sudet multum, frustraque laboret
> Ausus idem.*

There are no marks of art in his expression; it seems the very language of nature; you see in the style, not the writer and his labour, but the man in his own natural character. He may be rich in his expression; he may be full of figures, and of fancy; but these flow from him without effort; and he appears to write in this manner, not because he has studied it, but because it is the manner of expression most natural to him. A certain degree of

* 'From well-known tales such fictions would I raise,
As all might hope to imitate with ease;
Yet, while they strive the same success to gain,
Should find their labours and their hopes in vain.'—FRANCIS.

negligence, also, is not inconsistent with this character of style, and even not ungraceful in it; for too minute an attention to words is foreign to it: 'Habeat ille,' says Cicero, (Orat. No. 77.) 'molle quiddam, et quod indicet non ingratam negligentiam hominis, de re magis quàm de verbo laborantis.'* This is the great advantage of simplicity of style, that, like simplicity of manners, it shews us a man's sentiments and turn of mind laid open without disguise. More studied and artificial manners of writing, however beautiful, have always this disadvantage, that they exhibit an author in form, like a man at court, where the splendour of dress, and the ceremonial of behaviour, conceal those peculiarities which distinguish one man from another. But reading an author of simplicity, is like conversing with a person of distinction at home, and with ease, where we find natural manners, and a marked character.

The highest degree of this simplicity is expressed by a French term, to which we have none that fully answers in our language, 'naïveté.' It is not easy to give a precise idea of the import of this word. It always expresses a discovery of character. I believe the best account of it is given by a French critic, M. Marmontel, who explains it thus: That sort of amiable ingenuity, or undisguised openness, which seems to give us some degree of superiority over the person who shews it; a certain infantine simplicity, which we love in our hearts, but which displays some features of the character that we think we could have art enough to hide; and which, therefore, always leads us to smile at the person who discovers this character. La Fontaine, in his Fables, is given as the great example of such 'naïveté.' This, however, is to be understood, as descriptive of a particular species only of simplicity.

With respect to simplicity, in general, we may remark, that the ancient original writers are always the most eminent for it. This happens from a plain reason, that they wrote from the dictates of natural genius, and were not formed upon the labours and writings of others, which is always in hazard of producing affectation. Hence among the Greek writers, we have more models of a beautiful simplicity than among the Roman. Homer, Hesiod, Anacreon, Theocritus, Herodotus, and Xenophon, are all distinguished for it. Among the Romans, also, we have some writers of this character, particularly Terence, Lucretius, Phædrus, and Julius Cæsar. The following passage of Terence's Andria, is a beautiful instance of simplicity of manner in description:

Funus interim
Procedit; sequimur; ad sepulchrum venimus;
In ignem imposita est; fletur. Interea hæc soror,

---

* 'Let this style have a certain softness and ease, which shall characterise a negligence, not unpleasing in an author, who appears to be more solicitous about the thought than the expression.'

Quam dixi, ad flammam accessit imprudentius
Satis cum periculo. Ibi tum exanimatus Pamphilus,
Bene dissimulatum amorem, et celatum indicat;
Occurrit præceps, mulierem ab igne retrahit,
Mea Glycerium, inquit, quid agis? Cur te is perditum?
Tum illa, ut consuetum facile amorem cerneres,
Rejecit se in eum, flens quam familiariter.*---Act. i. sc. i.

All the words here are remarkably happy and elegant; and convey a most lively picture of the scene described: while, at the same time, the style appears wholly artless and unlaboured. Let us, next, consider some English writers who come under this class.

Simplicity is the great beauty of Archbishop Tillotson's manner. Tillotson has long been admired as an eloquent writer, and a model for preaching. But his eloquence, if we can call it such, has been often misunderstood. For, if we include, in the idea of eloquence, vehemence and strength, picturesque description, glowing figures, or correct arrangement of sentences, in all these parts of oratory the Archbishop is exceedingly deficient. His style is always pure, indeed, and perspicuous, but careless and remiss, too often feeble and languid; little beauty in the construction of his sentences, which are frequently suffered to drag unharmoniously; seldom any attempt towards strength or sublimity. But, notwithstanding these defects, such a constant vein of good sense and piety runs through his works, such an earnest and serious manner, and so much useful instruction conveyed in a style so pure, natural, and unaffected, as will justly recommend him to high regard, as long as the English language remains; not, indeed, as a model of the highest eloquence, but as a simple and amiable writer, whose manner is strongly expressive of great goodness and worth. I observed before that simplicity of manner may be consistent with some degree of negligence in style; and it is only the beauty of that simplicity which makes the negligence of such writers seem graceful. But, as appears in the Archbishop, negligence may sometimes be carried so far as to impair the beauty of simplicity, and make it border on a flat and languid manner.

Sir William Temple is another remarkable writer in the style of

* 'Meanwhile the funeral proceeds; we follow;
Come to the sepulchre: the body 's placed
Upon the pile; lamented; whereupon
This sister I was speaking of, all wild,
Ran to the flames with peril of her life.
There! there! the frighted Pamphilus betrays
His well-dissembled and long-hidden love;
Runs up and takes her round the waist, and cries,
Oh! my Glycerium! what is it you do?
Why, why endeavour to destroy yourself?
Then she, in such a manner, that you thence
Might easily perceive their long, long love,
Threw herself back into his arms, and wept,
Oh! how familiarly!' COLMAN

simplicity. In point of ornament and correctness, he rises a degree above Tillotson; though, for correctness, he is not in the highest rank. All is easy and flowing in him; he is exceedingly harmonious; smoothness, and what may be called amenity, are the distinguishing characters of his manner; relaxing sometimes, as such a manner will naturally do, into a prolix and remiss style. No writer whatever has stamped upon his style a more lively impression of his own character. In reading his works, we seem engaged in conversation with him; we become thoroughly acquainted with him, not merely as an author, but as a man; and contract a friendship for him. He may be classed as standing in the middle, between a negligent simplicity, and the highest degree of ornament which this character of style admits.

Of the latter of these, the highest, most correct, and ornamented degree of the simple manner, Mr. Addison is, beyond doubt, in the English language, the most perfect example: and, therefore, though not without some faults, he is, on the whole, the safest model for imitation, and the freest from considerable defects, which the language affords. Perspicuous and pure he is in the highest degree; his precision, indeed, not very great; yet nearly as great as the subjects which he treats of require: the construction of his sentences easy, agreeable, and commonly very musical; carrying a character of smoothness, more than of strength. In figurative language, he is rich: particularly in similes and metaphors; which are so employed as to render his style splendid without being gaudy. There is not the least affectation in his manner: we see no marks of labour; nothing forced or constrained; but great elegance joined with great ease and simplicity. He is, in particular, distinguished by a character of modesty, and of politeness, which appears in all his writings. No author has a more popular and insinuating manner; and the great regard which he every where shews for virtue and religion, recommends him highly. If he fails in any thing, it is in want of strength and precision, which renders his manner, though perfectly suited to such essays as he writes in the Spectator, not altogether a proper model for any of the higher and more elaborate kinds of composition. Though the public have ever done much justice to his merit, yet the nature of his merit has not always been seen in its true light; for, though his poetry be elegant, he certainly bears a higher rank among the prose writers, than he is entitled to among the poets; and, in prose, his humour is of a much higher and more original strain, than his philosophy. The character of Sir Roger de Coverly discovers more genius than the critique on Milton.

Such authors as those, whose characters I have been giving, one is never tired of reading. There is nothing in their manner that strains or fatigues our thoughts; we are pleased, without

being dazzled by their lustre. So powerful is the charm of simplicity in an author of real genius, that it atones for many defects, and reconciles us to many a careless expression. Hence in all the most excellent authors, both in prose and verse, the simple and natural manner may be always remarked; although other beauties being predominant, this forms not their peculiar and distinguishing character. Thus Milton is simple in the midst of all his grandeur; and Demosthenes in the midst of all his vehemence. To grave and solemn writings, simplicity of manner adds the more venerable air. Accordingly, this has often been remarked as the prevailing character throughout all the sacred Scriptures; and indeed no other character of style was so much suited to the dignity of inspiration.

Of authors, who, notwithstanding many excellences, have rendered their style much less beautiful by want of simplicity, I cannot give a more remarkable example than Lord Shaftesbury. This is an author on whom I have made observations several times before, and shall now take leave of him with giving his general character under this head. Considerable merit, doubtless, he has. His works might be read with profit for the moral philosophy which they contain, had he not filled them with so many oblique and invidious insinuations against the Christian religion, thrown out, too, with so much spleen and satire, as do no honour to his memory, either as an author or a man. His language has many beauties. It is firm, and supported in an uncommon degree; it is rich and musical. No English author, as I formerly shewed, has attended so much to the regular construction of his sentences, both with respect to propriety, and with respect to cadence. All this gives so much elegance and pomp to his language, that there is no wonder it should have been highly admired by some. It is greatly hurt, however, by perpetual stiffness and affectation. This is its capital fault. His lordship can express nothing with simplicity. He seems to have considered it as vulgar, and beneath the dignity of a man of quality, to speak like other men. Hence he is ever in buskins; and dressed out with magnificent elegance. In every sentence we see the marks of labour and art; nothing of that ease, which expresses a sentiment coming natural and warm from the heart. Of figures and ornament of every kind, he is exceedingly fond; sometimes happy in them; but his fondness for them is too visible; and, having once laid hold of some metaphor or allusion that pleased him, he knows not how to part with it. What is most wonderful, he was a professed admirer of simplicity; is always extolling it in the ancients, and censuring the moderns for the want of it; though he departs from it himself as far as any one modern whatever. Lord Shaftesbury possessed delicacy and refinement of taste, to a degree that we may call excessive and

sickly; but he had little warmth of passion; few strong or vigorous feelings: and the coldness of his character led him to that artificial and stately manner which appears in his writings. He was fonder of nothing than of wit and raillery; but he is far from being happy in it. He attempts it often, but always awkwardly; he is stiff even in his pleasantry; and laughs in form, like an author, and not like a man.*

From the account which I have given of Lord Shaftesbury's manner, it may easily be imagined, that he would mislead many who blindly admired him. Nothing is more dangerous to the tribe of imitators, than an author, who, with many imposing beauties, has also some very considerable blemishes. This is fully exemplified in Mr. Blackwall of Aberdeen, the author of the life of Homer, the Letters on Mythology, and the Court of Augustus: a writer of considerable learning, and of ingenuity also; but infected with an extravagant love of an artificial style, and of that parade of language which distinguishes the Shaftsburean manner.

Having now said so much to recommend simplicity, or the easy and natural manner of writing, and having pointed out the defects of an opposite manner; in order to prevent mistakes on this subject, it is necessary for me to observe, that it is very possible for an author to write simply, and yet not beautifully. One may be free from affectation, and not have merit. The beautiful simplicity supposes an author to possess real genius; to write with solidity, purity, and liveliness of imagination. In this case, the simplicity or unaffectedness of his manner, is the crowning ornament; it heightens every other beauty; it is the dress of nature, without which all beauties are imperfect. But if mere unaffectedness were sufficient to constitute the beauty of style, weak, trifling, and dull writers might often lay claim to this beauty. And accordingly, we frequently meet with pretended critics, who extol the dullest writers on account of what they call the 'chaste simplicity of their manner;' which, in truth, is no other than the absence of every ornament, through the mere want of genius and imagination. We must distinguish, therefore, between that simplicity which accompanies true genius, and which is perfectly compatible with every proper ornament of style, and that which is no other than a careless and slovenly manner. Indeed, the distinction is easily made from the effect produced. The one never fails to interest the reader; the other is insipid and tiresome.

* It may perhaps be not unworthy of being mentioned, that the first edition of his Inquiry into Virtue was published, surreptitiously I believe, in a separate form, in the year 1699; and is sometimes to be met with; by comparing which with the corrected edition of the same treatise, as it now stands among his works, we see one of the most curious and useful examples that I know, of what is called *limæ labor*; the art of polishing language, breaking long sentences, and working up an imperfect draught into a highly-finished performance.

I proceed to mention one other manner or character of style different from any that I have yet spoken of; which may be distinguished by the name of the Vehement. This always implies strength; and is not by any means, inconsistent with simplicity: but, in its predominant character, is distinguishable from either the strong or the simple manner. It has a peculiar ardour; it is a glowing style; the language of a man, whose imagination and passions are heated, and strongly affected by what he writes; who is therefore negligent of lesser graces, but pours himself forth with the rapidity and fulness of a torrent. It belongs to the higher kinds of oratory; and, indeed, is rather expected from a man who is speaking, than from one who is writing in his closet. The orations of Demosthenes furnish the full and perfect example of this species of style.

Among English writers, the one who has most of this character, though mixed, indeed, with several defects, is Lord Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke was formed by nature to be a factious leader; the demagogue of a popular assembly. Accordingly, the style that runs through all his political writings, is that of one declaiming with heat, rather than writing with deliberation. He abounds in rhetorical figures; and pours himself forth with great impetuosity. He is copious to a fault; places the same thought before us in many different views; but generally with life and ardour. He is bold, rather than correct; a torrent that flows strong, but often muddy. His sentences are varied as to length and shortness; inclining, however, most to long periods, sometimes including parentheses, and frequently crowding and heaping a multitude of things upon one another, as naturally happens in the warmth of speaking. In the choice of his words, there is great felicity and precision. In exact construction of sentences, he is much inferior to Lord Shaftesbury; but greatly superior to him in life and ease. Upon the whole, his merit, as a writer, would have been very considerable, if his matter had equalled his style. But whilst we find many things to commend in the latter, in the former, as I before remarked, we can hardly find any thing to commend. In his reasonings, for the most part, he is flimsy and false; in his poetical writings, factious; in what he calls his philosophical ones, irreligious and sophistical in the highest degree.

I shall insist no longer on the different manners of writers, or the general characters of style. Some other, beside those which I have mentioned, might be pointed out; but I am sensible, that it is very difficult to separate such general considerations of the style of authors from their peculiar turn of sentiment, which it is not my business at present to criticise. Conceited writers, for instance, discover their spirit so much in their composition, that it imprints on their style a character of pertness; though I confess it is dif-

ficult to say whether this can be classed among the attributes of style, or rather is to be ascribed entirely to the thought. In whatever class we rank it, all appearances of it ought to be avoided with care, as a most disgusting blemish in writing. Under the general heads, which I have considered, I have taken an opportunity of giving the character of many of the eminent classics in the English language.

From what I have said on this subject, it may be inferred, that to determine among all these different manners of writing, what is precisely the best, is neither easy nor necessary. Style is a field that admits of great latitude. Its qualities in different authors may be very different; and yet in them all beautiful. Room must be left here for genius; for that particular determination which every one receives from nature to one manner of expression more than another. Some general qualities, indeed, there are of such importance, as should always, in every kind of composition, be kept in view; and some defects we should always study to avoid. An ostentatious, a feeble, a harsh, or an obscure style, for instance, are always faults; and perspicuity, strength, neatness, and simplicity, are beauties to be always aimed at. But as to the mixture of all, or the degree of predominancy of any one of these good qualities, for forming our peculiar distinguishing manner, no precise rules can be given; nor will I venture to point out any one model as absolutely perfect.

It will be more to the purpose, that I conclude these dissertations upon style, with a few directions concerning the proper method of attaining a good style, in general; leaving the particular character of that style to be either formed by the subject on which we write, or prompted by the bent of genius.

The first direction which I give for this purpose, is, to study clear ideas on the subject concerning which we are to write or speak. This is a direction which may at first appear to have small relation to style. Its relation to it, however, is extremely close. The foundation of all good style, is good sense accompanied with a lively imagination. The style and thoughts of a writer are so intimately connected, that, as I have several times hinted, it is frequently hard to distinguish them. Whenever the impressions of things upon our minds are faint and indistinct, or perplexed and confused, our style in treating of such things will infallibly be so too. Whereas, what we conceive clearly and feel strongly, we shall naturally express with clearness and with strength. This, then, we may be assured, is a capital rule as to style, to think closely on the subject, till we have attained a full and distinct view of the matter which we are to clothe in words, till we become warm and interested in it; then, and not till then, shall we find expression begin to flow. Generally speaking, the best and most proper

expressions are those which a clear view of the subject suggests, without much labour or inquiry after them. This is Quinctilian's observation, lib. viii. c. i. 'Plerumque optima verba rebus cohærent, et cernuntur suo lumine. At nos quærimus illa, tanquam lateant seque subducant. Ita nunquam putamus verba esse circa id de quo dicendum est; sed ex aliis locis petimus, et inventis vim afferimus.'*

In the second place, in order to form a good style, the frequent practice of composing is indispensably necessary. Many rules concerning style I have delivered; but no rules will answer the end without exercise and habit. At the same time, it is not every sort of composing that will improve style. This is so far from being the case, that by frequent careless and hasty composition, we shall acquire certainly a very bad style; we shall have more trouble afterward in unlearning faults, and correcting negligences, than if we had not been accustomed to composition at all. In the beginning, therefore, we ought to write slowly and with much care. Let the facility and speed of writing be the fruit of longer practice. 'Moram et solicitudinem,' says Quinctilian, with the greatest reason, l. x. c. 3. 'initiis impero. Nam primum hoc constituendum ac obtinendum est, ut quam optime scribamus: celeritatem dabit consuetudo. Paulatim res facilius se ostendent, verba respondebunt, compositio prosequetur. Cuncta denique ut in familiâ bene institutâ in officio erunt. Summa hæc est rei; cito scribendo non fit ut bene scribatur; bene scribendo, fit ut cito.'†

We must observe, however, that there may be an extreme, in too great and anxious care about words. We must not retard the course of thought, nor cool the heat of imagination, by pausing too long on every word we employ. There is, on certain occasions, a glow of composition which should be kept up, if we hope to express ourselves happily, though at the expense of allowing some inadvertencies to pass. A more severe examination of these must be left to be the work of correction. For, if the practice of composition be useful, the laborious work of correcting is no less so; is indeed absolutely necessary to our reaping any benefit from the habit of composition. What we have written should be laid by for some

* 'The most proper words for the most part adhere to the thoughts which are to be expressed by them, and may be discovered as by their own light. But we hunt after them as if they were hidden, and only to be found in a corner. Hence, instead of conceiving the words to lie near the subject, we go in quest of them to some other quarter, and endeavour to give force to the expressions we have found out.'

† 'I enjoin that such as are beginning the practice of composition, write slowly, and with anxious deliberation. Their great object at first should be, to write as well as possible; practice will enable them to write speedily. By degrees matter will offer itself still more readily; words will be at hand; composition will flow; every thing, as in the arrangement of a well-ordered family, will present itself in its proper place. The sum of the whole is this, by hasty composition, we shall never acquire the art of composing well; by writing well, we shall come to write speedily.'

little time, till the ardour of composition be past, till the fondness for the expressions we have used be worn off, and the expressions themselves be forgotten; and then reviewing our work with a cool and critical eye, as if it were the performance of another, we shall discern many imperfections which at first escaped us. Then is the season for pruning redundancies; for examining the arrangement of sentences; for attending to the juncture and connecting particles; and bringing style into a regular, correct, and supported form. This '*limæ labor*' must be submitted to by all who would communicate their thoughts with proper advantage to others; and some practice in it will soon sharpen their eye to the most necessary objects of attention, and render it a much more easy and practicable work than might at first be imagined.

In the third place, with respect to the assistance that is to be gained from the writings of others, it is obvious, that we ought to render ourselves well acquainted with the style of the best authors. This is requisite, both in order to form a just taste in style, and to supply us with a full stock of words on every subject. In reading authors with a view to style, attention should be given to the peculiarities of their different manners; and in this, and former Lectures, I have endeavoured to suggest several things that may be useful in this view. I know no exercise that will be found more useful for acquiring a proper style, than to translate some passage from an eminent English author into our own words. What I mean is, to take, for instance, some page of one of Mr. Addison's Spectators, and read it carefully over two or three times, till we have got a firm hold of the thoughts contained in it; then to lay aside the book; to attempt to write out the passage from memory, in the best way we can; and having done so, next to open the book, and compare what we have written, with the style of the author. Such an exercise will, by comparison, shew us where the defects of our style lie; will lead us to the proper attentions for rectifying them; and among the different ways in which the same thought may be expressed, will make us perceive that which is the most beautiful. But,

In the fourth place, I must caution, at the same time, against a servile imitation of any author whatever. This is always dangerous. It hampers genius; it is likely to produce a stiff manner; and those who are given to close imitation, generally imitate an author's faults as well as his beauties. No man will ever become a good writer or speaker, who has not some degree of confidence to follow his own genius. We ought to beware, in particular, of adopting any author's noted phrases, or transcribing passages from him. Such a habit will prove fatal to all genuine composition. Infinitely better it is to have something that is our own, though of moderate beauty, than to affect to shine in borrowed ornaments,

which will, at last, betray the utter poverty of our genius. On these heads of composing, correcting, reading and imitating, I advise every student of oratory to consult what Quinctilian has delivered in the tenth book of his Institutions, where he will find a variety of excellent observations and directions that well deserve attention.

In the fifth place, it is an obvious, but material rule, with respect to style, that we always study to adapt it to the subject, and also to the capacity of our hearers, if we are to speak in public. Nothing merits the name of eloquent or beautiful, which is not suited to the occasion, and to the persons to whom it is addressed. It is to the last degree awkward and absurd, to attempt a poetical florid style, on occasions when it should be our business only to argue and reason; or to speak with elaborate pomp of expression, before persons who comprehend nothing of it, and who can only stare at our unseasonable magnificence. These are defects not so much in point of style, as, what is much worse, in point of common sense. When we begin to write or speak, we ought previously to fix in our minds a clear conception of the end to be aimed at; to keep this steadily in our view, and to suit our style to it. If we do not sacrifice to this great object, every ill-timed ornament that may occur to our fancy, we are unpardonable; and though children and fools may admire, men of sense will laugh at us and our style.

In the last place, I cannot conclude the subject without this admonition, that, in any case, and on any occasion, attention to style must not engross us so much, as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts; 'Curam verborum,' says the great Roman critic, 'rerum volo esse solicitudinem.'* A direction the more necessary, as the present taste of the age in writing seems to lean more to style than to thought. It is much easier to dress up trivial and common sentiments with some beauty of expression, than to afford a fund of vigorous, ingenious, and useful thoughts. The latter requires true genius; the former may be attained by industry, with the help of very superficial parts. Hence, we find so many writers frivolously rich in style, but wretchedly poor in sentiment. The public ear is now so much accustomed to a correct and ornamented style, that no writer can, with safety, neglect the study of it. But he is a contemptible one, who does not look to something beyond it; who does not lay the chief stress upon his matter, and employ such ornaments of style to recommend it, as are manly not foppish: 'Majore animo,' says the writer whom I have so often quoted, 'aggredienda est eloquentia; quæ si toto corpore valet, ungues polire et capillum componere, non existimabit ad curam suam pertinere. Ornatus et virilis et fortis, et sanctus sit; nec

* 'To your expression be attentive; but about your matter be solicitous.'

effeminatam levitatem, et fuco ementitum colorem amet; sanguine et viribus niteat.'

LECTURE XX.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE OF MR. ADDISON, IN No. 411. OF THE SPECTATOR.

I HAVE insisted fully on the subject of language and style, both because it is, in itself, of great importance, and because it is more capable of being ascertained by precise rule, than several other parts of composition. A critical analysis of the style of some good author will tend farther to illustrate the subject; as it will suggest observations which I have not had occasion to make, and will shew, in the most practical light, the use of those which I have made

Mr. Addison is the author whom I have chosen for this purpose. The Spectator, of which his papers are the chief ornament, is a book which is in the hands of every one, and which cannot be praised too highly. The good sense, and good writing, the useful morality, and the admirable vein of humour which abound in it, render it one of those standard books which have done the greatest honour to the English nation. I have formerly given the general character of Mr. Addison's style and manner, as natural and unaffected, easy and polite, and full of those graces which a flowery imagination diffuses over writing. At the same time, though one of the most beautiful writers in the language, he is not the most correct; a circumstance which renders his composition the more proper to be the subject of our present criticism. The free and flowing manner of this amiable writer sometimes led him into inaccuracies, which the more studied circumspection and care of far inferior writers have taught them to avoid. Remarking his beauties, therefore, which I shall have frequent occasion to do as I proceed, I must also point out his negligences and defects. Without a free impartial discussion of both the faults and beauties which occur in his composition, it is evident this piece of criticism would be of no service: and from the freedom which I use in criticising Mr. Addison's style, none can imagine, that I mean to depreciate his writings, after having repeatedly declared the high

* 'A higher spirit ought to animate those who study eloquence. They ought to consult the health and fondness of the whole body, rather than bend their attention to such trifling objects as paring the nails and dressing the hair. Let ornament be manly and chaste, without effeminate gaiety, or artificial colouring; let it shine with the glow of health and strength.'

opinion which I entertain of them. The beauties of this author are so many, and the general character of his style is so elegant and estimable, that the minute imperfections I shall have occasion to point out, are but like those spots in the sun, which may be discovered by the assistance of art, but which have no effect in obstructing its lustre. It is, indeed, my judgment, that what Quinctilian applies to Cicero, 'Ille se profecisse sciat, cui Cicero valde placebit,' may, with justice, be applied to Mr. Addison; that to be highly pleased with his manner of writing, is the criterion of one's having acquired a good taste in English style. The paper on which we are now to enter, is No. 411., the first of his celebrated Essays on the Pleasures of the Imagination, in the sixth volume of the Spectator. It begins thus:

'Our sight is the most perfect, and most delightful of all our senses.'

This is an excellent introductory sentence. It is clear, precise, and simple. The author lays down, in a few plain words, the proposition which he is going to illustrate throughout the rest of the paragraph. In this manner we should always set out. A first sentence should seldom be a long, and never an intricate one.

He might have said, 'Our sight is the most perfect and the most delightful.'——But he has judged better, in omitting to repeat the article 'the.' For the repetition of it is proper chiefly when we intend to point out the objects of which we speak, as distinguished from, or contrasted with, each other; and when we want that the reader's attention should rest on that distinction. For instance; had Mr. Addison intended to say, That our sight is at once the most 'delightful,' and the most 'useful,' of all our senses, the article might then have been repeated with propriety, as a clear and strong distinction would have been conveyed. But as between 'perfect' and 'delightful,' there is less contrast, there was no occasion for such repetition. It would have had no other effect, but to add a word unnecessarily to the sentence. He proceeds:

'It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action, without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments.'

This sentence deserves attention, as remarkably harmonious and well constructed. It possesses, indeed, almost all the properties of a perfect sentence. It is entirely perspicuous. It is loaded with no superfluous or unnecessary words. For 'tired or satiated,' towards the end of the sentence, are not used for synonymous terms. They convey distinct ideas, and refer to different members of the period; that this sense 'continues the longest in action without being tired,' that is, without being fatigued with its action; and also, without being 'satiated with its proper enjoyments.' That

quality of a good sentence which I termed its unity, is here perfectly preserved. It is 'our sight' of which he speaks. This is the object carried through the sentence, and presented to us in every member of it, by those verbs, 'fills, converses, continues,' to each of which it is clearly the nominative. Those capital words are disposed of in the most proper places; and that uniformity is maintained in the construction of the sentence, which suits the unity of the object.

Observe, too, the music of the period; consisting of three members, each of which, agreeably to a rule I formerly mentioned, grows, and rises above the other in sound, till the sentence is conducted, at last, to one of the most melodious closes which our language admits; 'without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments.' 'Enjoyments' is a word of length and dignity, exceedingly proper for a close which is designed to be a musical one. The harmony is the more happy, as this disposition of the members of the period, which suits the sound so well, is no less just and proper with respect to the sense. It follows the order of nature. First, we have the variety of objects mentioned, which sight furnishes to the mind; next, we have the action of sight on those objects; and lastly, we have the time and continuance of its action. No order could be more natural or happy.

This sentence has still another beauty. It is figurative, without being too much so for the subject. A metaphor runs through it. The sense of sight is, in some degree, personified. We are told of its 'conversing' with its objects; and of its not being 'tired' or 'satiated' with its 'enjoyments;' all of which expressions are plain allusions to the actions and feelings of men. This is that slight sort of personification, which, without any appearance of boldness, and without elevating the fancy much above its ordinary state, renders discourse picturesque, and leads us to conceive the author's meaning more distinctly, by clothing abstract ideas, in some degree, with sensible colours. Mr. Addison abounds with this beauty of style beyond most authors; and the sentence which we have been considering, is very expressive of his manner of writing. There is no blemish in it whatever, unless that a strict critic might perhaps object, that the epithet 'large,' which he applies to 'variety'—'the largest varieties of ideas,' is an epithet more commonly applied to extent than to number. It is plain, that he here employed it to avoid the repetition of the word 'great,' which occurs immediately afterward.

'The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours; but at the same time, it is very much straitened and confined in its operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects.'

This sentence is by no means so happy as the former. It is, indeed, neither clear nor elegant. 'Extension and shape' can, with no propriety, be called 'ideas;' they are the properties of matter. Neither is it accurate, even according to Mr. Locke's philosophy (with which our author seems here to have puzzled himself), to speak of any sense 'giving us a notion of ideas;' our senses give us the ideas themselves. The meaning would have been much more clear, if the author had expressed himself thus: 'The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us the idea of extension, figure, and all the other properties of matter which are perceived by the eye, except colours.'

The latter part of the sentence is still more embarrassed. For what meaning can we make of the sense of feeling being 'confined in its operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects?' Surely, every sense is confined, as much as the sense of feeling, to the number, bulk, and distance of its own objects. Sight and feeling are, in this respect, perfectly on a level; neither of them can extend beyond its own objects. The turn of expression is so inaccurate here, that one would be apt to suspect two words to have been omitted in the printing, which were originally in Mr. Addison's manuscript; because the insertion of them would render the sense much more intelligible and clear. These two words are, 'with regard:'—'it is very much straitened and confined in its operations, with regard to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects.' The meaning then would be, that feeling is more limited than sight *in this respect;* that it is confined to a narrower circle, to a smaller number of objects.

The epithet 'particular,' applied to 'objects,' in the conclusion of the sentence, is redundant, and conveys no meaning whatever. Mr. Addison seems to have used it in place of 'peculiar,' as indeed he does often in other passages of his writings. But 'particular' and 'peculiar,' though they are too often confounded, are words of different import from each other. 'Particular' stands opposed to 'general;' 'peculiar' stands opposed to what is possessed in 'common with others.' 'Particular' expresses what in the logical style is called 'species;' 'peculiar' what is called 'differentia.' 'Its peculiar objects' would have signified in this place, the objects of the sense of feeling, as distinguished from the objects of any other sense; and would have had more meaning than 'its particular objects.' Though, in truth, neither the one nor the other epithet was requisite. It was sufficient to have said simply, 'its objects.'

'Our sight seems designed to supply all these defects, and may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of touch, that spreads itself over an infinite multitude of bodies, comprehends the largest figures, and brings into our reach some of the most remote parts of the universe.'

Here again the author's style returns upon us in all its beauty. This is a sentence distinct, graceful, well-arranged, and highly musical. In the latter part of it, it is constructed with three members, which are formed much in the same manner with those of the second sentence, on which I bestowed so much praise. The construction is so similar, that if it had followed immediately after it, we should have been sensible of a faulty monotony. But the interposition of another sentence between them prevents this effect.

'It is this sense which furnishes the imagination with its ideas; so that by the pleasures of the imagination or fancy (which I shall use promiscuously) I here mean such as arise from visible objects, either when we have them actually in our view; or when we call up their ideas into our minds by painting, statues, descriptions, or any the like occasion.'

In place of, 'It is this sense which furnishes'—the author might have said more shortly, 'This sense furnishes.' But the mode of expression which he has used, is here more proper. This sort of full and ample assertion, 'it is this which,' is fit to be used when a proposition of importance is laid down, to which we seek to call the reader's attention. It is like pointing with the hand at the object of which we speak. The parenthesis in the middle of the sentence, 'which I shall use promiscuously,' is not clear. He ought to have said, 'terms which I shall use promiscuously;' as the verb 'use' relates not to the pleasures of the imagination, but to the terms of fancy and imagination, which he was to employ as synonymous. 'Any the like occasion'—to call a painting or a statue 'an occasion' is not a happy expression, nor is it very proper to speak of 'calling up ideas by occasion.' The common phrase, 'any such means,' would have been more natural.

'We cannot indeed have a single image in the fancy, that did not make its first entrance through the sight; but we have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the imagination; for, by this faculty, a man in a dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with scenes and landscapes more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole compass of nature.'

It may be of use to remark, that in one member of this sentence there is an inaccuracy in syntax. It is very proper to say. 'altering and compounding those images which we have once received into all the varieties of picture and vision.' But we can with no propriety say, 'retaining them into all the varieties;' and yet, according to the manner in which the words are ranged, this construction is unavoidable. For, 'retaining,' 'altering,' and 'compounding,' are participles, each of which equally refers to, and governs, the subsequent noun, 'those images;' and that noun again

is necessarily connected with the following preposition, 'into.' This instance shews the importance of carefully attending to the rules of grammar and syntax; when so pure a writer as Mr. Addison could, through inadvertence, be guilty of such an error. The construction might easily have been rectified, by disjoining the participle 'retaining' from the other two participles in this way: 'We have the power of retaining those images which we have once received; and of altering and compounding them into all the varieties of picture and vision;' or better perhaps thus: 'We have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received; and of forming them into all the varieties of picture and vision.'—The latter part of the sentence is clear and elegant.

'There are few words in the English language, which are employed in a more loose and uncircumscribed sense than those of the fancy and the imagination.'

'There are few words—which are employed.'—It had been better, if our author here had said more simply—'Few words in the English language are employed.'—Mr. Addison, whose style is of the free and full, rather than the nervous kind, deals, on all occasions, in this extended sort of phraseology. But it is proper only when some assertion of consequence is advanced, and which can bear an emphasis such as that in the first sentence of the former paragraph. On other occasions, these little words, 'it is,' and 'there are,' ought to be avoided as redundant and enfeebling.—— 'Those of the fancy and the imagination.' The article ought to have been omitted here. As he does not mean the powers of 'the fancy and the imagination,' but the words only, the article certainly had no proper place; neither, indeed, was there any occasion for other two words, 'those of.' Better, if the sentence had run thus: 'Few words in the English language are employed in a more loose and uncircumscribed sense, than fancy and imagination.'

'I therefore thought it necessary to fix and determine the notion of these two words, as I intend to make use of them in the thread of my following speculations, that the reader may conceive rightly what is the subject which I proceed upon.'

Though 'fix' and 'determine' may appear synonymous words, yet a difference between them may be remarked, and they may be viewed, as applied here, with peculiar delicacy. The author had just said, that the words of which he is speaking were 'loose' and 'uncircumscribed.' 'Fix' relates to the first of these, 'determine' to the last. We 'fix' what is 'loose;' that is, we confine the word to its proper place, that it may not fluctuate in our imagination, and pass from one idea to another; and we 'determine' what is 'uncircumscribed,' that is, we ascertain its 'termini' or limits, we draw the circle round it, that we may see its boundaries. For we

cannot conceive the meaning of a word, nor indeed of any other thing, clearly, till we see its limits, and know how far it extends. These two words, therefore, have grace and beauty as they are here applied; though a writer more frugal of words than Mr. Addison would have preferred the single word 'ascertain,' which conveys, without any metaphor, the import of them both.

The 'notion of these words' is somewhat of a harsh phrase, at least not so commonly used, as the 'meaning of these words.'—'As I intend to make use of them in the thread of my speculations,' this is plainly faulty. A sort of metaphor is improperly mixed with words in the literal sense. He might very well have said, 'as I intend to make use of them in my following speculations.'—— This was plain language; but if he chose to borrow an allusion from 'thread,' that allusion ought to have been supported; for there is no consistency in 'making use of them in the thread of speculations;' and, indeed, in expressing any thing so simple and familiar as this is, plain language is always to be preferred to metaphorical.——'The subject which I proceed upon,' is an ungraceful close of a sentence; better, 'the subject upon which I proceed.'

'I must therefore desire him to remember, that by the pleasures of the imagination, I mean only such pleasures as arise originally from sight, and that I divide these pleasures into two kinds.'

As the last sentence began with,—'I therefore thought it neces sary to fix,' it is careless to begin this sentence in a manner so very similar, 'I must therefore desire him to remember;' especially as the small variation of using, 'on this account,' or 'for this reason,' in place of 'therefore,' would have amended the style——When he says—'I mean only such pleasures'—it may be remarked that the adverb 'only' is not in its proper place. It is not intended here to qualify the verb 'mean;' but 'such pleasures;' and therefore should have been placed in as close connexion as possible with the word which it limits or qualifies. The style becomes more clear and neat, when the words are arranged thus: 'by the pleasures of the imagination, I mean such pleasures only as arise from sight.'

'My design being, first of all, to discourse of those primary pleasures of the imagination, which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes; and, in the next place, to speak of those secondary pleasures of the imagination, which flow from the ideas of visible objects when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious.

It is a great rule in laying down the division of a subject, to study neatness and brevity as much as possible. The divisions are then more distinctly apprehended, and more easily remembered. This sentence is not perfectly happy in that respect. It is somewhat clogged by a tedious phraseology. 'My design being

first of all to discourse—in the next place to speak of—such objects as are before our eyes—things that are either absent or fictitious.' Several words might have been spared here; and the style made more neat and compact.

'The pleasures of the imagination, taken in their full extent, are not so gross as those of sense, not so refined as those of the understanding.'

This sentence is distinct and elegant.

'The last are indeed more preferable, because they are founded on some new knowledge or improvement in the mind of man: yet it must be confessed, that those of the imagination are as great, and as transporting as the other.'

In the beginning of this sentence, the phrase 'more preferable,' is such a plain inaccuracy, that one wonders how Mr. Addison should have fallen into it; seeing 'preferable,' of itself, expresses the comparative degree, and is the same with more eligible or more excellent.

I must observe farther, that the proposition contained in the last member of this sentence is neither clear nor neatly expressed—'it must be confessed, that those of the imagination are as great and as transporting as the other.'---In the former sentence, he had compared three things together; the pleasures of the imagination, those of sense, and those of the understanding. In the beginning of this sentence, he had called the pleasures of the understanding, 'the last:' and he ends the sentence, with observing, that those of the imagination are as great and transporting 'as the other.' Now, besides that 'the other' makes not a proper contrast with 'the last,' he leaves it ambiguous, whether, by 'the other,' he meant the pleasures of the understanding, or the pleasures of sense; for it may refer to either by the construction; though, undoubtedly, he intended that it should refer to the pleasures of the understanding only. The proposition, reduced to perspicuous language, runs thus: 'Yet it must be confessed, that the pleasures of the imagination, when compared with those of the understanding, are no less great and transporting.'

'A beautiful prospect delights the soul, as much as a demonstration; and a description in Homer has charmed more readers than a chapter in Aristotle.'

This is a good illustration of what he had been asserting, and is expressed with that happy and elegant turn for which our author is very remarkable.

'Besides, the pleasures of the imagination have this advantage, above those of the understanding, that they are more obvious, and more easy to be acquired.'

This is also an unexceptionable sentence.

'It is but opening the eye, and the scene enters.'

This sentence is lively and picturesque. By the gaiety and briskness which it gives the style, it shews the advantage of intermixing such a short sentence as this amidst a run of longer ones, which never fails to have a happy effect. I must remark, however, a small inaccuracy. A 'scene' cannot be said to 'enter;' an 'actor' enters; but a scene 'appears' or 'presents itself.'

'The colours paint themselves on the fancy, with very little attention of thought or application of mind in the beholder.'

This is still beautiful illustration; carried on with that agreeable floweriness of fancy and style, which is so well suited to those pleasures of the imagination, of which the author is treating.

'We are struck, we know not how, with the symmetry of any thing we see, and immediately assent to the beauty of an object, without inquiring into the particular causes and occasions of it.'

There is a falling off here from the elegance of the former sentences. We 'assent' to the truth of a proposition; but cannot so well be said to 'assent to the beauty of an object.' 'Acknowledge' would have expressed the sense with more propriety. The close of the sentence too is heavy and ungraceful---'the particular causes and occasions of it'—both 'particular' and 'occasions' are words quite superfluous; and the pronoun 'it' is in some measure ambiguous, whether it refers to 'beauty' or to 'object.' It would have been some amendment to the style to have run thus: 'We immediately acknowledge the beauty of an object, without inquiring into the cause of that beauty.'

'A man of a polite imagination is let into a great many pleasures that the vulgar are not capable of receiving.'

'Polite' is a term more commonly applied to manners or behaviour, than to the mind or imagination. There is nothing farther to be observed on this sentence, unless the use of 'that' for a relative pronoun, instead of 'which;' a usage which is too frequent with Mr. Addison. 'Which' is a much more definite word than 'that,' being never employed in any other way than as a relative; whereas 'that' is a word of many senses; sometimes a demonstrative pronoun, often a conjunction. In some cases we are indeed obliged to use 'that' for a relative, in order to avoid the ungraceful repetition of 'which' in the same sentence. But when we are laid under no necessity of this kind, 'which' is always the preferable word, and certainly was so in this sentence. 'Pleasures which the vulgar are not capable of receiving,' is much better than 'pleasures that the vulgar,' &c.

'He can converse with a picture and find an agreeable companion in a statue. He meets with a secret refreshment in a description; and often feels a greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows, than another does in the possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in every thing he sees; and makes the

most rude uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasures; so that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind.'

All this is very beautiful. The illustration is happy; and the style runs with the greatest ease and harmony. We see no labour, no stiffness, or affectation; but an author writing from the native flow of a gay and pleasing imagination. This predominant character of Mr. Addison's manner, far more than compensates all those little negligences which we are now remarking. Two of these occur in this paragraph. The first in the sentence which begins with, 'It gives him indeed a kind of property'—To this 'it,' there is no proper antecedent in the whole paragraph. In order to gather the meaning, we must look back as far as to the third sentence before the first of the paragraph, which begins with, 'A man of a polite imagination.' This phrase 'polite imagination,' is the only antecedent to which this 'it' can refer; and even that is an improper antecedent, as it stands in the genitive case, as the qualification only of a man.

The other instance of negligence, is towards the end of the paragraph—'So that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light.'—By 'another' light, Mr. Addison means, a light different from that in which other men view the world. But though this expression clearly conveyed this meaning to himself when writing, it conveys it very indistinctly to others; and is an instance of that sort of inaccuracy, into which, in the warmth of composition, every writer of a lively imagination is apt to fall; and which can only be remedied by a cool subsequent review.—'As it were'—is upon most occasions no more than an ungraceful palliative, and here there was not the least occasion for it, as he was not about to say any thing which required a softening of this kind. To say the truth, this last sentence, 'so that he looks upon the world,' and what follows, had better been wanting altogether. It is no more than an unnecessary recapitulation of what had gone before; a feeble adjection to the lively picture he had given of the pleasures of the imagination. The paragraph would have ended with more spirit at the words immediately preceding; 'the uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasures.'

'There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal; every diversion they take is at the expense of some one virtue or another, and their very first step out of business is into vice or folly.'

Nothing can be more elegant, or more finely turned than this sentence. It is neat, clear, and musical. We could hardly alter one word, or disarrange one member, without spoiling it. Few sentences are to be found more finished, or more happy.

'A man should endeavour, therefore, to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as wide as possible, that he may retire into them with safety, and find in them such a satisfaction as a wise man would not blush to take.'

This also is a good sentence, and gives occasion to no material remark.

'Of this nature are those of the imagination, which do not require such a bent of thought as is necessary to our more serious employments, nor, at the same time, suffer the mind to sink into that indolence and remissness, which are apt to accompany our more sensual delights; but like a gentle exercise to the faculties, awaken them from sloth and idleness, without putting them upon any labour or difficulty.'

The beginning of this sentence is not correct, and affords an instance of a period too loosely connected with the preceding one. 'Of this nature,' says he, 'are those of the imagination.' We might ask, of what nature? For it had not been the scope of the preceding sentence to describe the nature of any set of pleasures. He had said, that it was every man's duty to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as wide as possible, in order that, within that sphere, he might find a safe retreat and a laudable satisfaction. The transition is loosely made, by beginning the next sentepce with saying, 'Of this nature are those of the imagination.' It had been better, if, keeping in view the governing object of the preceding sentence, he had said, 'This advantage we gain,' or 'This satisfaction we enjoy, by means of the pleasures of imagination.' The rest of the sentence is abundantly correct.

'We might here add, that the pleasures of the fancy are more conducive to health than those of the understanding, which are worked out by dint of thinking, and attended with too violent a labour of the brain.'

On this sentence nothing occurs deserving of remark, except that 'worked out by dint of thinking;' is a phrase which borders too much on vulgar and colloquial language, to be proper for being employed in a polished composition.

'Delightful scenes, whether in nature, painting, or poetry, have a kindly influence on the body, as well as the mind, and not only serve to clear and brighten the imagination, but are able to disperse grief and melancholy, and to set the animal spirits in pleasing and agreeable motions. For this reason Sir Francis Bacon, in his Essay upon Health, has not thought it improper to prescribe to his reader a poem, or a prospect, where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtile disquisitions, and advises him to pursue studies that fill the mind with splendid and illustrious objects, as histories, fables, and contemplations of nature.'

In the latter of these two sentences, a member of the period is

altogether out of its place; which gives the whole sentence a harsh and disjointed cast, and serves to illustrate the rules I formerly gave concerning arrangement. The wrong placed member which I point at is this; 'where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtile disquisitions;' these words should, undoubtedly, have been placed not where they stand, but thus: 'Sir Francis Bacon, in his Essay upon Health, where he particularly dissuades the reader from knotty and subtile speculations, has not thought it improper to prescribe to him,' &c. This arrangement reduces every thing into proper order.

'I have in this paper, by way of introduction, settled the notion of those pleasures of the imagination, which are the subject of my present undertaking, and endeavoured, by several considerations, to recommend to my readers the pursuit of those pleasures; I shall, in my next paper, examine the several sources from whence these pleasures are derived.'

These two concluding sentences afford examples of the proper collocation of circumstances in a period. I formerly shewed, that it is often a matter of difficulty to dispose of them in such a manner, as that they shall not embarrass the principal subject of the sentence. In the sentences before us several of these incidental circumstances necessarily come in—'By way of introduction—by several considerations—in this paper—in the next paper.' All which are, with great propriety, managed by our author. It will be found, upon trial, that there were no other parts of the sentence, in which they could have been placed to equal advantage. Had he said, for instance, 'I have settled the notion (rather, the meaning)—of those pleasures of the imagination, which are the subject of my present undertaking, by way of introduction in this paper, and endeavoured to recommend the pursuit of those pleasures to my readers by several considerations;' we must be sensible that the sentence, thus clogged with circumstances in the wrong place, would neither have been so neat nor so clear, as it is by the present construction.

LECTURE XXI.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN No. 412. OF THE SPECTATOR.

THE observations which have occurred in reviewing that paper of Mr. Addison's, which was the subject of the last Lecture, sufficiently shew, that, in the writings of an author of the most happy genius and distinguished talents, inaccuracies may sometimes be

found. Though such inaccuracies may be overbalanced by so many beauties, as render style highly pleasing and agreeable upon the whole, yet it must be desirable to every writer to avoid, as far as he can, inaccuracy of any kind. As the subject therefore is of importance, I have thought it might be useful to carry on this criticism throughout two or three subsequent papers of the Spectator. At the same time I must intimate that the Lectures on these papers are solely intended for such as are applying themselves to the study of English style. I pretend not to give instruction to those who are already well acquainted with the powers of language. To them my remarks may prove unedifying; to some they may seem tedious and minute; but to such as have not yet made all the proficiency which they desire in elegance of style, strict attention to the composition and structure of sentences cannot fail to prove of considerable benefit: and though my remarks on Mr. Addison should, in any instance, be thought ill-founded, they will, at least, serve the purpose of leading them into the train of making proper remarks for themselves.* I proceed, therefore, to the examination of the subsequent paper, No. 412.

'I shall first consider those pleasures of the imagination, which arise from the actual view and survey of outward objects: and these, I think, all proceed from the sight of what is great, uncommon, or beautiful.'

This sentence gives occasion for no material remark. It is simple and distinct. The two words which he here uses, 'view' and 'survey,' are not altogether synonymous: as the former may be supposed to import mere inspection; the latter more deliberate examination. Yet they lie so near to one another in meaning, that in the present case, any one of them, perhaps, would have been sufficient. The epithet 'actual,' is introduced, in order to mark more strongly the distinction between what our author calls the primary pleasures of imagination, which arise from immediate view, and the secondary, which arise from remembrance or description.

'There may, indeed, be something so terrible or offensive, that the horror or loathsomeness of an object may overbear the plea-

* If there be readers who think any farther apology requisite for my adventuring to criticise the sentences of so eminent an author as Mr. Addison, I must take notice, that I was naturally led to it by the circumstances of that part of the kingdom where these Lectures were read; where the ordinary spoken language often differs much from what is used by good English authors. Hence it occurred to me, as a proper method of correcting any peculiarities of dialect, to direct students of eloquence to analyze and examine, with particular attention, the structure of Mr. Addison's sentences. Those papers of the Spectator, which are the subject of the following Lectures, were accordingly given out in exercise to students, to be thus examined and analyzed; and several of the observations which follow, both on the beauties and blemishes of this author, were suggested by the observations given to me in consequence of the exercise prescribed.

sure which results from its novelty, greatness, or beauty; but still there will be such a mixture of delight in the very disgust it gives us, as any of these three qualifications are most conspicuous and prevailing.'

This sentence must be acknowledged to be an unfortunate one. The sense is obscure and embarrassed, and the expression loose and irregular. The beginning of it is perplexed by the wrong position of the words 'something' and 'object.' The natural arrangement would have been, 'There may, indeed, be something in an object so terrible or offensive, that the horror or loathsomeness of it may overbear.'—These two epithets 'horror' or 'loathsomeness,' are awkwardly joined together. 'Loathsomeness' is, indeed, a quality which may be ascribed to an object; but 'horror' is not; it is a feeling excited in the mind. The language would have been much more correct, had our author said, 'There may, indeed, be something in an object so terrible or offensive, that the horror or disgust which it excites may overbear.'—The two first epithets, 'terrible' or 'offensive,' would then have expressed the qualities of an object; the latter, 'horror' or 'disgust,' the corresponding sentiments which these qualities produce in us. 'Loathsomeness' was the most unhappy word he could have chosen; for to be 'loathsome,' is to be odious, and seems totally to exclude any 'mixture of delight,' which he afterward suppose may be found in the object.

In the latter part of the sentence there are several inaccuracies. When he says, 'there will be such a mixture of delight in the very disgust it gives us, as any of these three qualifications are most conspicuous'—the construction is defective, and seems hardly grammatical. He meant assuredly to say, 'such a mixture of delight as is proportioned to the degree in which any of these three qualifications are most conspicuous.' We know that there may be a mixture of pleasant and disagreeable feelings excited by the same object; yet it appears inaccurate to say, that there is any 'delight in the very disgust.' The plural verb 'are,' is improperly joined to 'any of these three qualifications;' for as 'any' is here used distributively, and means 'any one of these three qualifications,' the corresponding verb ought to have been singular. The order in which the two last words are placed, should have been reversed, and made to stand 'prevailing and conspicuous.' They are 'conspicuous' because they prevail

'By greatness, I do not only mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of a whole view, considered as one entire piece.'

In a former Lecture, when treating of the Structure of Sentences, I quoted this sentence as an instance of the careless manner in which adverbs are sometimes interjected in the midst of a period. 'Only,' as it is here placed, appears to be a limitation of the following verb 'mean.' The question might be put, What more does

he than only mean? As the author, undoubtedly, intended it to refer to the 'bulk of a single object,' it would have been placed with more propriety, after these words: 'I do not mean the bulk of any single object only, but the largeness of a whole view.'—As the following phrase, 'considered as one entire piece,' seems to be somewhat deficient, both in dignity and propriety, perhaps this adjection might have been altogether omitted, and the sentence have closed with fully as much advantage at the word 'view.'

'Such are the prospects of an open champaign country, a vast uncultivated desert, of huge heaps of mountains, high rocks and precipices, or a wide expanse of waters, where we are not struck with the novelty or beauty of the sight, but with that rude kind of magnificence which appears in many of these stupendous works of nature.'

This sentence, in the main, is beautiful. The objects presented are all of them noble, selected with judgment, arranged with propriety, and accompanied with proper epithets. We must, however, observe, that the sentence is too loosely, and not very grammatically, connected with the preceding one. He says,—'such are the prospects;'—'such' signifies, of that nature or quality, which necessarily presupposes some adjective, or word descriptive of a quality going before, to which it refers. But, in the foregoing sentence, there is no such adjective. He had spoken of 'greatness' in the abstract only; and, therefore, 'such' has no distinct antecedent to which we can refer it. The sentence would have been introduced with more grammatical propriety, by saying, 'to this class belong,' or, 'under this head are ranged the prospects,' &c. The 'of,' which is prefixed to 'huge heaps of mountains,' is misplaced, and has, perhaps, been an error in the printing; as, either all the particulars here enumerated should have had this mark of the genitive, or it should have been prefixed to none but the first. When, in the close of the sentence, the author speaks of that 'rude magnificence which appears in many of these stupendous works of nature,' he had better have omitted the word 'many,' which seems to except some of them. Whereas, in his general proposition, he undoubtedly meant to include all the stupendous works he had enumerated; and there is no question that, in all of them, a rude magnificence appears.

'Our imagination loves to be filled with an object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its capacity. We are flung into a pleasing astonishment at such unbounded views; and feel a delightful stillness and amazement in the soul, at the apprehension of them.'

The language here is elegant, and several of the expressions remarkably happy. There is nothing which requires any animadversion except the close, 'at the apprehension of them.' Not

only is this a languid enfeebling conclusion of a sentence, otherwise beautiful, but 'the apprehension of views' is a phrase destitute of all propriety, and, indeed, scarcely intelligible. Had this adjection been entirely omitted, and the sentence been allowed to close with 'stillness and amazement in the soul,' it would have been a great improvement. Nothing is frequently more hurtful to the grace or vivacity of a period, than superfluous dragging words at the conclusion.

'The mind of man naturally hates every thing that looks like a restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy itself under a sort of confinement, when the sight is pent up in a narrow compass, and shortened on every side by the neighbourhood of walls or mountains. On the contrary, a spacious horizon is an image of liberty, where the eye has room to range abroad, to expatiate at large on the immensity of its views, and to lose itself amidst the variety of objects that offer themselves to its observation. Such wide and undetermined prospects are as pleasing to the fancy, as the speculations of eternity, or infinitude, are to the understanding.'

Our author's style appears here, in all that native beauty which cannot be too much praised. The numbers flow smoothly, and with a graceful harmony. The words which he has chosen carry a certain amplitude and fulness, well suited to the nature of the subject; and the members of the periods rise in a gradation, accommodated to the rise of the thought. The eye first 'ranges abroad;' then 'expatiates at large on the immensity of its views;' and, at last, 'loses itself amidst the variety of objects that offer themselves to its observation.' The 'fancy' is elegantly contrasted with the 'understanding,' 'prospects' with 'speculations,' and 'wide and undetermined prospects' with 'speculations of eternity and infinitude.'

'But if there be a beauty or uncommonness joined with this grandeur, as in a troubled ocean, a heaven adorned with stars and meteors, or a spacious landscape cut out into rivers, woods, rocks, and meadows, the pleasure still grows upon us, as it arises from more than a single principle.'

The article prefixed to 'beauty,' in the beginning of this sentence, might have been omitted, and the style have run, perhaps, to more advantage thus: 'but if beauty, or uncommonness, be joined to this grandeur.'—'A landscape cut out into rivers, woods,' &c. seems unseasonably to imply an artificial formation, and would have been better expressed by, 'diversified with rivers, woods,' &c.

'Every thing that is new or uncommon raises a pleasure in the imagination, because it fills the soul with an agreeable surprise, gratifies its curiosity, and gives it an idea of which it was not before possessed. We are, indeed, so often conversant with one set of objects, and tired out with so many repeated shows of the same

things, that whatever is new or uncommon contributes a little to vary human life, and to divert our minds for a while, with the strangeness of its appearance. It serves us for a kind of refreshment, and takes off from that satiety we are apt to complain of in our usual and ordinary entertainments.'

The style in these sentences flows in an easy and agreeable manner. A severe critic might point out some expressions that would bear being retrenched. But this would alter the genius and character of Mr. Addison's style. We must always remember, that good composition admits of being carried on under many different forms. Style must not be reduced to one precise standard. One writer may be as agreeable, by a pleasing diffuseness, when the subject bears, and his genius prompts it, as another by a concise and forcible manner. It is fit, however, to observe, that in the beginning of those sentences which we have at present before us, the phrase, 'raises a pleasure in the imagination,' is unquestionably too flat and feeble, and might easily be amended, by saying, 'affords pleasure to the imagination;' and towards the end there are two 'of's' which grate harshly on the ear, in that phrase, 'takes off from that satiety we are apt to complain of;' where the correction is as easily made as in the other case, by substituting 'diminishes that satiety of which we are apt to complain.' Such instances shew the advantage of frequent reviews of what we have written, in order to give proper correctness and polish to our language.

'It is this which bestows charms on a monster, and makes even the imperfections of nature please us. It is this that recommends variety, where the mind is every instant called off to something new, and the attention not suffered to dwell too long, and waste itself, on any particular object. It is this likewise, that improves what is great or beautiful, and makes it afford the mind a double entertainment.'

Still the style proceeds with perspicuity, grace, and harmony. The full and ample assertion, with which each of these sentences is introduced, frequent, on many occasions, with our author, is here proper and seasonable; as it was his intention to magnify, as much as possible, the effects of novelty and variety, and to draw our attention to them. His frequent use of 'that,' instead of which, is another peculiarity of his style; but on this occasion in particular, cannot be much commended, as, 'it is this which,' seems, in every view, to be better than, 'it is this that,' three times repeated. I must likewise take notice, that the antecedent to 'it is this,' when critically considered, is not altogether proper. It refers, as we discover by the sense, to 'whatever is new or uncommon.' But as it is not good language to say, 'whatever is new bestows charms on a monster,' one cannot avoid thinking that our

author had done better to have begun the first of these three sentences with saying, 'It is novelty which bestows charms on a monster,' &c.

'Groves, fields, and meadows, are at any season of the year pleasant to look upon, but never so much as in the opening of the spring, when they are all new and fresh, with their first gloss upon them, and not yet too much accustomed and familiar to the eye.'

In this expression, 'never so much as in the opening of the spring,' there appears to be a small error in grammar; for when the construction is filled up, it must be read, 'never so much pleasant.' Had he, to avoid this, said, 'never so much so,' the grammatical error would have been prevented, but the language would have been awkward. Better to have said, 'but never so agreeable as in the opening of the spring.' We readily say, the eye is accustomed to objects; but to say, as our author has done at the close of the sentence, that objects are 'accustomed to the eye,' can scarcely be allowed in a prose composition.

'For this reason there is nothing that more enlivens a prospect than rivers, jetteaus, or falls of water, where the scene is perpetually shifting, and entertaining the sight every moment with something that is new. We are quickly tired with looking at hills and valleys, where every thing continues fixed and settled in the same place and posture, but find our thoughts a little agitated and relieved at the sight of such objects as are ever in motion, and sliding away from beneath the eye of the beholder.'

The first of these sentences is connected in too loose a manner with that which immediately preceded it. When he says, 'For this reason there is nothing that more enlivens,' &c. we are entitled to look for the 'reason' in what he had just before said. But there we find no 'reason' for what he is now going to assert, except that groves and meadows are most pleasant in the spring. We know that he has been speaking of the pleasure produced by novelty and variety, and our minds naturally recur to this, as the reason here alluded to; but his language does not properly express it. It is, indeed, one of the defects of this amiable writer, that his sentences are often too negligently connected with one another. His meaning, upon the whole, we gather with ease from the tenor of his discourse. Yet this negligence prevents his sense from striking us with that force and evidence which a more accurate juncture of parts would have produced. Bating this inaccuracy, these two sentences, especially the latter, are remarkably elegant and beautiful. The close, in particular, is uncommonly fine, and carries as much expressive harmony as the language can admit. It seems to paint what he is describing, at once to the eye and the ear—'Such objects as are ever in motion, and sliding away from beneath the eye of the beholder.'—Indeed, notwithstanding those small errors,

which the strictness of critical examination obliges me to point out, it may be safely pronounced, that the two paragraphs which we have now considered in this paper, the one concerning greatness and the other concerning novelty, are extremely worthy of Mr. Addison, and exhibit a style, which they who can successfully imitate, may esteem themselves happy.

'But there is nothing that makes its way more directly to the soul than beauty, which immediately diffuses a secret satisfaction and complacency through the imagination, and gives a finishing to any thing that is great or uncommon. The very first discovery of it strikes the mind with an inward joy, and spreads a cheerfulness and delight through all its faculties.'

Some degree of verbosity may be here discovered, as phrases are repeated which seem little more than the echo of one another; such as 'diffusing satisfaction and complacency through the imagination—striking the mind with inward joy—spreading cheerfulness and delight through all its faculties.' At the same time, I readily admit that this full and flowing style, even though it carry some redundancy, is not unsuitable to the gaeity of the subject on which the author is entering, and is more allowable here than it would have been on some other occasions.

'There is not, perhaps, any real beauty or deformity more in one piece of matter than another; because we might have been so made, that whatever now appears loathsome to us, might have shewn itself agreeable; but we find by experience, that there are several modifications of matter which the mind, without any previous consideration, pronounces at first sight beautiful or deformed.'

In this sentence there is nothing remarkable, in any view, to draw our attention. We may observe only that the word 'more,' towards the beginning, is not in its proper place, and that the preposition 'in' is wanting before 'another.' The phrase ought to have stood thus—'Beauty or deformity in one piece of matter, more than in another.'

'Thus we see that every different species of sensible creatures has its different notions of beauty, and that each of them is most affected with the beauties of its own kind. This is no where more remarkable than in birds of the same shape and proportion, when we often see the male determined in his courtship by the single grain or tincture of a feather, and never discovering any charms but in the colour of its species.'

Neither is there here any particular elegance or felicity of language.—'Different sense of beauty' would have been a more proper expression to have been applied to irrational creatures, than as it stands, 'different notions of beauty.' In the close of the second sentence, when the author says 'colour of its species,' he is guilty of a considerable inaccuracy in changing the gender, as he had said

in the same sentence that the 'male was determined in his courtship.'

'There is a second kind of beauty, that we find in the several products of art and nature, which does not work in the imagination with that warmth and violence, as the beauty that appears in our proper species, but is apt, however, to raise in us a secret delight, and a kind of fondness for the places or objects in which we discover it.'

Still, I am sorry to say, we find little to praise. As in his enunciation of the subject, when beginning the former paragraph, he appeared to have been treating of beauty in general, in distinction from greatness or novelty; this 'second kind of beauty,' of which he here speaks, comes upon us in a sort of surprise, and it is only by degrees we learn that formerly he had no more in view than the beauty which the different species of sensible creatures find in one another. This 'second kind of beauty,' he says, 'we find in the several products of art and nature.' He undoubtedly means, not in all, but 'in several of the products of art and nature;' and ought so to have expressed himself; and in the place of 'products' to have used also the more proper word 'productions.' When he adds, that this kind of beauty 'does not work in the imagination with that warmth and violence as the beauty that appears in our proper species;' the language would certainly have been more pure and elegant if he had said, that it 'does not work upon the imagination with such warmth and violence, as the beauty that appears in our own species.'

'This consists either in the gaiety or variety of colours, in the symmetry and proportion of parts, in the arrangement and disposition of bodies, or in a just mixture and concurrence of all together. Among these several kinds of beauty, the eye takes most delight in colours.'

To the language here I see no objection that can be made.

'We no where meet with a more glorious or pleasing show in nature than what appears in the heavens at the rising and setting of the sun, which is wholly made up of those different stains of light that shew themselves in clouds of a different situation.'

The chief ground of criticism on this sentence, is the disjointed situation of the relative 'which.' Grammatically, it refers to 'the rising and setting of the sun.' But the author meant, that it should refer to 'the show' which appears in the heavens at that time. It is too common among authors, when they are writing without much care, to make such particles as 'this,' and 'which,' refer not to any particular antecedent word, but to the tenor of some phrase, or perhaps the scope of some whole sentence, which has gone before. This practice saves them trouble in marshalling their words, and arranging a period: but though it may leave their

meaning intelligible, yet it renders that meaning much less perspicuous, determined, and precise, than it might otherwise have been. The error I have pointed out, might have been avoided by a small alteration in the construction of the sentence, after some such manner as this: 'We no where meet with a more glorious and pleasing show in nature than what is formed in the heavens at the rising and setting of the sun, by the different stains of light which shew themselves in clouds of different situations.' Our author writes, 'in clouds of a different situation,' by which he means, clouds that differ in situation from each other. But as this is neither the obvious nor grammatical meaning of his words, it was necessary to change the expression, as I have done, into the plural number.

'For this reason, we find the poets, who are always addressing themselves to the imagination, borrowing more of their epithets from colours than from any other topic.'

On this sentence nothing occurs, except a remark similar to what was made before, of loose connexion with the sentence which precedes. For, though he begins with saying, 'For this reason,' the foregoing sentence, which was employed about the 'clouds' and 'the sun,' gives no reason for the general proposition he now lays down. The 'reason' to which he refers was given two sentences before, when he observed that the eye takes more delight in colours than in any other beauty; and it was with that sentence that the present one should have stood immediately connected.

'As the fancy delights in every thing that is great, strange, or beautiful, and is still more pleased, the more it finds of these perfections in the same object, so it is capable of receiving a new satisfaction by the assistance of another sense.'

'Another sense' here, means grammatically, 'another sense than fancy.' For there is no other thing in the period to which this expression, 'another sense,' can at all be opposed. He had not for some time made mention of any 'sense' whatever. He forgot to add, what was undoubtedly in his thoughts, 'another sense than that of sight.'

'Thus any continued sound, as the music of birds, or a fall of water, awakens every moment the mind of the beholder, and makes him more attentive to the several beauties of the place which lie before him. Thus, if there arises a fragrancy of smells or perfumes, they heighten the pleasures of the imagination, and make even the colours and verdure of the landscape appear more agreeable: for the ideas of both senses recommend each other, and are pleasanter together than when they enter the mind separately; as the different colours of a picture, when they are well-disposed, set off one another, and receive an additional beauty from the advantage of their situation.'

Whether Mr. Addison's theory here be just or not may be questioned. A continued sound, such as that of a fall of water, is so far from 'awakening every moment the mind of the beholder,' that nothing is more likely to lull him asleep. It may, indeed, please the imagination, and heighten the beauties of the scene; but it produces this effect, by a soothing, not by an awakening influence. With regard to the style, nothing appears exceptionable. The flow, both of language and of ideas, is very agreeable. The author continues to the end the same pleasing train of thought which had run through the rest of the paper; and leaves us agreeably employed in comparing together different degrees of beauty.

LECTURE XXII.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN No. 413. OF THE SPECTATOR.

'Though in yesterday's paper we considered how every thing that is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure, we must own, that it is impossible for us to assign the necessary cause of this pleasure, because we know neither the nature of an idea nor the substance of a human soul, which might help us to discover the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other; and therefore, for want of such a light, all that we can do in speculations of this kind is to reflect on those operations of the soul that are most agreeable, and to range under their proper heads what is pleasing or displeasing to the mind, without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient causes from whence the pleasure or displeasure arises.'

This sentence, considered as an introductory one, must be acknowledged to be very faulty. An introductory sentence should never contain any thing that can in any degree fatigue or puzzle the reader. When an author is entering on a new branch of his subject, informing us of what he has done, and what he purposes farther to do, we naturally expect that he should express himself in the simplest and most perspicuous manner possible. But the sentence now before us is crowded and indistinct; containing three separate propositions, which, as I shall afterward shew, required separate sentences to unfold them. Mr. Addison's chief excellency as a writer lay in describing and painting. There he is great; but in methodizing and reasoning he is not so eminent. As, besides the general fault of prolixity and indistinctness, this sentence contains several inaccuracies, I shall be obliged to enter into a minute discussion of its structure and parts; a discussion which to

many readers will appear tedious, and which therefore they will naturally pass over; but which, to those who are studying composition, I hope may prove of some benefit.

'Though in yesterday's paper we considered.'—The import of 'though' is 'notwithstanding that.' When it appears in the beginning of a sentence, its relative generally is 'yet:' and it is employed to warn us, after we have been informed of some truth, that we are not to infer from it some other thing which we might perhaps have expected to follow: as, 'Though virtue be the only road to happiness, yet it does not permit the unlimited gratification of our desires.' Now it is plain, that there was no such opposition between the subject of yesterday's paper, and what the author is now going to say, between his asserting a fact, and his not being able to assign the cause of that fact, as rendered the use of this adversative particle 'though' either necessary or proper in the introduction.—'We considered how every thing that is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure.'—The adverb 'how' signifies, either the means by which, or the manner in which, something is done. But, in truth, neither one nor the other of these had been considered by our author. He had illustrated the fact alone, that they do affect the imagination with pleasure; and with respect to the 'quomodo,' or the 'how,' he is so far from having considered it, that he is just now going to shew that it cannot be explained, and that we must rest contented with the knowledge of the fact alone, and of its purpose or final cause. 'We must own that it is impossible for us to assign the necessary cause' (he means, what is more commonly called the 'efficient cause') 'of this pleasure, because we know neither the nature of an idea, nor the substance of a human soul.'—'The substance of a human soul' is certainly a very uncouth expression, and there appears no reason why he should have varied from the word 'nature,' which would have been equally applicable to 'idea' and to 'soul.'

'Which might help us,' our author proceeds, 'to discover the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other.'—The 'which,' at the beginning of this member of the period, is surely ungrammatical, as it is a relative, without any antecedent in all the sentence. It refers, by the construction, to 'the nature of an idea, or the substance of a human soul;' but this is by no means the reference which the author intended. His meaning is, that 'our knowing the nature of an idea, and the substance of a human soul, might help us to discover the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other: and therefore the syntax absolutely required the word 'knowledge' to have been inserted as the antecedent to 'which.' 'I have before remarked, and the remark deserves to be repeated, that nothing is a more certain sign of careless composition than to make such relatives as 'which' not refer to any pre

cise expression, but carry a loose and vague relation to the general strain of what had gone before. When our sentences run into this form, we may be assured there is something in the construction of them that requires alteration. The phrase of discovering 'the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other' is likewise exceptionable; for 'disagreeableness' neither forms a proper contrast to the other word 'conformity,' nor expresses what the author meant here (as far as any meaning can be gathered from his words), that is, a certain unsuitableness or want of conformity to the nature of the soul. To say the truth, this member of the sentence had much better have been omitted altogether. 'The conformity or disagreeableness of an idea to the substance of a human soul,' is a phrase which conveys to the mind no distinct nor intelligible conception whatever. The author had before given a sufficient reason for his not assigning the efficient cause of those pleasures of the imagination, because we neither know the nature of our own ideas nor of the soul: and this farther discussion about the conformity or disagreeableness of the nature of the one, to the substance of the other, affords no clear nor useful illustration.

'And therefore,' the sentence goes on, 'for want of such a light, all that we can do in speculations of this kind, is to reflect on those operations of the soul that are most agreeable, and to range under their proper heads what is pleasing or displeasing to the mind.' The two expressions in the beginning of this member, 'therefore,' and 'for want of such a light,' evidently refer to the same thing, and are quite synonymous. One or other of them, therefore, had better have been omitted. Instead of 'to range under their proper heads,' the language would have been smoother, if 'their' had been left out. 'Without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient causes from whence the pleasure or displeasure arises.' The expression, 'from whence,' though seemingly justified by very frequent usage, is taxed by Dr. Johnson as a vicious mode of speech; seeing 'whence' alone has all the power of 'from whence,' which therefore appears an unnecessary reduplication. I am inclined to think, that the whole of this last member of the sentence had better have been dropped. The period might have closed with full propriety, at the words, 'pleasing or displeasing to the mind.' All that follows, suggests no idea that had not been fully conveyed in the preceding part of the sentence. It is a mere expletive adjection which might be omitted, not only without injury to the meaning, but to the great relief of a sentence already labouring under the multitude of words.

Having now finished the analysis of this long sentence, I am inclined to be of opinion, that if, on any occasion, we can adventure to alter Mr. Addison's style, it may be done to advantage here, by breaking down this period in the following manner: 'In yester-

day's paper, we have shewn that every thing which is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure. We must own that it is impossible for us to assign the efficient cause of this pleasure, because we know not the nature either of an idea, or of the human soul. All that we can do, therefore, in speculations of this kind, is to reflect on the operations of the soul which are most agreeable, and to range, under proper heads, what is pleasing or displeasing to the mind.'—We proceed now to the examination of the following sentences.

'Final causes lie more bare and open to our observation, as there are often a great variety that belong to the same effect; and these, though they are not altogether so satisfactory, are generally more useful than the other, as they give us greater occasion of admiring the goodness and wisdom of the first contriver.'

Though some difference might be traced between the sense of 'bare' and 'open,' yet as they are here employed, they are so nearly synonymous, that one of them was sufficient. It would have been enough to have said, 'final causes lie more open to observation.' One can scarcely help observing here, that the obviousness of final causes does not proceed, as Mr. Addison supposes, from a variety of them concurring in the same effect, which is often not the case; but from our being able to ascertain more clearly, from our own experience, the congruity of a final cause with the circumstances of our condition; whereas the constituent parts of subjects, whence efficient causes proceed, lie for the most part beyond the reach of our faculties. But as this remark respects the thought more than the style, it is sufficient for us to observe, that when he says, 'a great variety that belong to the same effect,' the expression, strictly considered, is not altogether proper. The accessory is properly said to belong to the principal; not the principal to the accessory. Now an effect is considered as the accessory or consequence of its cause; and therefore, though we might well say a variety of effects belong to the same cause, it seems not so proper to say, that a variety of causes belong to the same effect.

'One of the final causes of our delight in any thing that is great may be this: The supreme Author of our being has so formed the soul of man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper happiness. Because, therefore, a great part of our happiness must arise from the contemplation of his being, that he might give our souls a just relish of such a contemplation, he has made them naturally delight in the apprehension of what is great or unlimited.'

The concurrence of two conjunctions, 'because,' 'therefore,' forms rather a harsh and unpleasing beginning of the last of these sentences; and, in the close, one would think, that the author might have devised a happier word than 'apprehension,' to be applied to

what is 'unlimited.' But that I may not be thought hypercritical, I shall make no farther observation on these sentences.

'Our admiration, which is a very pleasing motion of the mind, immediately rises at the consideration of any object that takes up a good deal of room in the fancy, and, by consequence, will improve into the highest pitch of astonishment and devotion, when we contemplate his nature, that is neither circumscribed by time nor place, nor to be comprehended by the largest capacity of a created being.'

Here, our author's style rises beautifully along with the thought However inaccurate he may sometimes be when coolly philosophizing, yet, whenever his fancy is awakened by description, or his mind, as here, warmed with some glowing sentiment, he presently becomes great, and discovers, in his language, the hand of a master. Every one must observe, with what felicity this period is constructed. The words are long and majestic. The members rise one above another, and conduct the sentence, at last, to that full and harmonious close, which leaves upon the mind such an impression as the author intended to leave, of something uncommonly great, awful, and magnificent.

'He has annexed a secret pleasure to the idea of any thing that is new or uncommon, that he might encourage us in the pursuit of knowledge, and engage us to search into the wonders of creation; for every new idea brings such a pleasure along with it, as rewards the pains we have taken in its acquisition, and, consequently, serves as a motive to put us upon fresh discoveries.'

The language, in this sentence, is clear and precise; only we cannot but observe in this, and the two following sentences, which are constructed in the same manner, a strong proof of Mr. Addison's unreasonable partiality to the particle 'that,' in preference to 'which'—'annexed a secret pleasure to the idea of any thing that is new or uncommon, that he might encourage us.'—Here the first 'that' stands for a relative pronoun, and the next 'that,' at the distance only of four words, is a conjunction. This confusion of sounds serves to embarrass style. Much better, sure, to have said, 'the idea of any thing which is new or uncommon, that he might encourage.'—The expression with which the sentence concludes—'a motive to put us upon fresh discoveries'—is flat, and, in some degree, improper. He should have said, 'put us upon making fresh discoveries'—or rather, serves as a motive inciting us to make fresh discoveries.'

'He has made every thing that is beautiful in our own species pleasant, that all creatures might be tempted to multiply their kind, and fill the world with inhabitants; for 'tis very remarkable, that wherever nature is crossed in the production of a monster (the result of any unnatural mixture), the breed is incapable of propagating its likeness, and of founding a new order of creatures; so

that, unless all animals were allured by the beauty of their own species, generation would be at an end, and the earth unpeopled.'

Here we must, however reluctantly, return to the employment of censure; for this is among the worst sentences our author ever wrote; and contains a variety of blemishes. Taken as a whole, it is extremely deficient in unity. Instead of a complete proposition, it contains a sort of chain of reasoning, the links of which are so ill put together, that it is with difficulty we can trace the connexion; and unless we take the trouble of perusing it several times, it will leave nothing on the mind but an indistinct and obscure impression.

Besides this general fault respecting the meaning, it contains some great inaccuracies in language. First, God's having made every thing which 'is beautiful in our species' (that is, in the human species) 'pleasant,' is certainly no motive for 'all creatures,' for beasts, and birds, and fishes, 'to multiply their kind.' What the author meant to say, though he has expressed himself in so erroneous a manner, undoubtedly was, 'In all the different orders of creatures, he has made every thing which is beautiful in their own species pleasant, that all creatures might be tempted to multiply their kind.' The second member of the sentence is still worse. 'For, it is very remarkable, that wherever nature is crossed in the production of a monster,' &c. The reason which he here gives for the preceding assertion, intimated by the casual particle 'for,' is far from being obvious. The connexion of thought is not readily apparent, and would have required an intermediate step to render it distinct. But, what does he mean, by 'nature being crossed in the production of a monster?' One might understand him to mean, 'disappointed in its intention of producing a monster;' as when we say, one is crossed in his pursuits, we mean, that he is disappointed in accomplishing the end which he intended. Had he said, 'crossed by the production of a monster,' the sense would have been more intelligible. But the proper rectification of the expression would be to insert the adverb 'as,' before the preposition 'in,' after this manner—'wherever nature is crossed, as in the production of a monster;'—the insertion of this particle 'as,' throws so much light on the construction of this member of the sentence, that I am very much inclined to believe it had stood thus, originally, in our author's manuscript; and that the present reading is a typographical error, which, having crept into the first edition of the Spectator, ran through all the subsequent ones.

'In the last place, he has made every thing that is beautiful, in all other objects, pleasant, or rather has made so many objects appear beautiful, that he might render the whole creation more gay and delightful. He has given almost every thing about us the power of raising an agreeable idea in the imagination; so that it is impossi-

ble for us to behold his works with coldness or indifference, and to survey so many beauties without a secret satisfaction and complacency.'

The idea, here, is so just, and the language so clear, flowing, and agreeable, that to remark any diffuseness which may be attributed to these sentences, would be justly esteemed hypercritical.

'Things would make but a poor appearance to the eye, if we saw them only in their proper figures and motions: and what reason can we assign for their exciting in us many of those ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the objects themselves (for such are light and colours), were it not to add supernumerary ornaments to the universe, and make it more agreeable to the imagination?'

Our author is now entering on a theory, which he is about to illustrate, if not with much philosophical accuracy, yet with great beauty of fancy and glow of expression. A strong instance of his want of accuracy appears in the manner in which he opens the subject. For what meaning is there in things 'exciting in us many of those ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the objects?' No one, sure, ever imagined, that our ideas exist in the objects. Ideas, it is agreed on all hands, can exist no where but in the mind. What Mr. Locke's philosophy teaches, and what our author should have said, is, 'exciting in us many ideas of qualities which are different from any thing that exists in the objects.' The ungraceful parenthesis which follows, 'for such are light and colours,' had far better have been avoided, and incorporated with the rest of the sentence, in this manner:—'exciting in us many ideas of qualities, such as light and colours, which are different from any thing that exists in the objects.'

'We are every where entertained with pleasing shows and apparitions. We discover imaginary glories in the heavens, and in the earth, and see some of this visionary beauty poured out upon the whole creation; but what a rough unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, and the several distinctions of light and shade vanish? In short, our souls are delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion; and we walk about like the enchanted hero of a romance, who sees beautiful castles, woods, and meadows; and, at the same time, hears the warbling of birds, and the purling of streams; but, upon the finishing of some secret spell, the fantastic scene breaks up, and the disconsolate knight finds himself on a barren heath, or in a solitary desert.'

After having been obliged to point out several inaccuracies, I return with much more pleasure to the display of beauties, for which we have now full scope; for these two sentences are such as do the highest honour to Mr. Addison's talents as a writer

Warmed with the idea he had laid hold of, his delicate sensibility to the beauty of nature is finely displayed in the illustration of it. The style is flowing and full, without being too diffuse. It is flowery, but not gaudy; elevated, but not ostentatious.

Amidst this blaze of beauties, it is necessary for us to remark one or two inaccuracies. When it is said, towards the close of the first of those sentences, 'what a rough unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with,' the preposition 'with,' should have been placed at the beginning, rather than at the end of this member; and the word 'entertained,' is both improperly applied here, and carelessly repeated from the former part of the sentence. It was there employed according to its more common use, as relating to agreeable objects. 'We are every where entertained with pleasing shows.' Here, it would have been more proper to have changed the phrase, and said, 'with what a rough unsightly sketch of nature should we be presented.'—At the close of the second sentence, where it is said, 'the fantastic scene breaks up,' the expression is lively, but not altogether justifiable. An assembly 'breaks up;' a scene 'closes' or 'disappears.'

Excepting these two slight inaccuracies, the style, here, is not only correct, but perfectly elegant. The most striking beauty of the passage arises from the happy simile which the author employs, and the fine illustration which it gives to the thought. The 'enchanted hero,' the 'beautiful castles,' the 'fantastic scene,' the 'secret spell,' the 'disconsolate knight,' are terms chosen with the utmost felicity, and strongly recall all those romantic ideas with which he intended to amuse our imagination. Few authors are more successful in their imagery than Mr. Addison; and few passages, in his works, or in those of any author, are more beautiful and picturesque, than that on which we have been commenting.

'It is not improbable, that something like this may be the state of the soul after its first separation, in respect of the images it will receive from matter; though, indeed, the ideas of colours are so pleasing and beautiful in the imagination, that it is possible the soul will not be deprived of them, but, perhaps, find them excited by some other occasional cause, as they are, at present, by the different impressions of the subtile matter on the organ of sight.'

As all human things, after having attained the summit, begin to decline, we must acknowledge, that, in this sentence, there is a sensible falling off from the beauty of what went before. It is broken, and deficient in unity. Its parts are not sufficiently compact. It contains besides, some faulty expressions. When it is said, 'something like this may be the state of the soul;' to the pronoun 'this,' there is no determined antecedent; it refers to the general import of the preceding description, which, as I have several times remarked, always renders style clumsy and inelegant, if not obscure

—'the state of the soul after its first separation,' appears to be an incomplete phrase, and 'first,' seems a useless, and even an improper word. More distinct if he had said—'state of the soul immediately on its separation from the body.' The adverb 'perhaps,' is redundant, after having just before said, 'it is possible.'

'I have here supposed that my reader is acquainted with that great modern discovery, which is, at present, universally acknowledged by all the inquirers into natural philosophy; namely, that light and colours, as apprehended by the imagination, are only ideas in the mind, and not qualities that have any existence in matter. As this is a truth which has been proved incontestably by many modern philosophers, and is, indeed, one of the finest speculations in that science, if the English reader would see the notion explained at large, he may find it in the eighth chapter of the second book of Mr. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding.'

In these two concluding sentences, the author, hastening to finish, appears to write rather carelessly. In the first of them, a manifest tautology occurs, when he speaks of what is 'universally acknowledged by all inquirers.' In the second, when he calls 'a truth which has been incontestably proved;' first, a 'speculation,' and afterward a 'notion,' the language surely is not very accurate. When he adds, 'one of the finest speculations in that science,' it does not, at first, appear what science he means. One would imagine, he meant to refer to 'modern philosophers;' for natural philosophy (to which, doubtless, he refers) stands at much too great a distance to be the proper or obvious antecedent to the pronoun 'that.' The circumstance towards the close, 'if the English reader would see the notion explained at large, he may find it,' is properly taken notice of by the author of the Elements of Criticism, as wrong arranged, and is rectified thus: 'the English reader, if he would see the notion explained at large, may find it,' &c.

In concluding the examination of this paper, we may observe, that, though not a very long one, it exhibits a striking view both of the beauties, and the defects, of Mr. Addison's style. It contains some of the best, and some of the worst sentences that are to be found in his works. But, upon the whole, it is an agreeable and elegant essay.

LECTURE XXIII.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN No. 414. OF THE SPECTATOR.

'If we consider the works of nature and art, as they are qualified to entertain the imagination, we shall find the last very defec-

tive in comparison of the former; for though they may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange, they can have nothing in them of that vastness and immensity which afford so great an entertainment to the mind of the beholder.'

I had occasion formerly to observe, that an introductory sentence should always be short and simple, and contain no more matter than is necessary for opening the subject. This sentence leads to a repetition of this observation, as it contains both an assertion and the proof of that assertion; two things, which, for the most part, but especially at first setting out, are with more advantage kept separate. It would certainly have been better, if this sentence had contained only the assertion, ending with the word 'former;' and if a new one had then begun, entering on the proofs of nature's superiority over art, which is the subject continued to the end of the paragraph. The proper division of the period I shall point out, after having first made a few observations which occur on different parts of it.

'If we consider the works.'—Perhaps it might have been preferable, if our author had begun with saying, 'When we consider the works.' Discourse ought always to begin, when it is possible, with a clear proposition. The 'if,' which is here employed, converts the sentence into a supposition, which is always in some degree entangling, and proper to be used only when the course of reasoning renders it necessary. As this observation, however, may perhaps be considered as over-refined, and as the sense would have remained the same in either form of expression, I do not mean to charge our author with any error on this account. We cannot absolve him from inaccuracy in what immediately follows—'the works of nature and art.' It is the scope of the author, throughout this whole paper, to compare nature and art together, and to oppose them in several views to each other. Certainly, therefore, in the beginning, he ought to have kept them as distinct as possible, by interposing the preposition, and saying, 'The works of nature and of art.' As the words stand at present, they would lead us to think that he is going to treat of these works, not as contrasted, but as connected; as united in forming one whole. When I speak of body and soul as united in the human nature, I would interpose neither article nor preposition between them; 'man is compounded of soul and body.' But the case is altered, if I mean to distinguish them from each other; then I represent them as separate; and say, 'I am to treat of the interests of the soul, and of the body.'

'Though they may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange.'—I cannot help considering this as a loose member of the period. It does not clearly appear at first what the antecedent is to 'they.' In reading onwards, we see the works of art to be meant; but from the structure of the sentence, 'they' might be understood to refer

to 'the former,' as well as to 'the last.' In what follows, there is a greater ambiguity—'may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange.' It is very doubtful in what sense we are to understand 'as,' in this passage. For, according as it is accented in reading, it may signify, that 'they appear equally beautiful or strange,' to wit, with the works of nature; and then it has the force of the Latin 'tam:' or it may signify, no more than that they 'appear in the light of beautiful and strange;' and then it has the force of the Latin 'tanquam,' without importing any comparison. An expression so ambiguous, is always faulty; and it is doubly so here; because, if the author intended the former sense, and meant (as seems most probable) to employ 'as' for a mark of 'comparison,' it was necessary to have mentioned both the compared objects; whereas only one member of the comparison is here mentioned, viz. the works of art; and if he intended the latter sense, 'as' was in that case superfluous and encumbering, and he had better have said simply, 'appear beautiful or strange.' The epithet 'strange,' which Mr. Addison applies to the works of art, cannot be praised. 'Strange works' appears not by any means a happy expression to signify what he here intends, which is new or uncommon.

The sentence concludes with much harmony and dignity—'they can have nothing in them of that vastness and immensity which afford so great an entertainment to the mind of the beholder.' There is here a fulness and grandeur of expression well suited to the subject; though, perhaps, 'entertainment' is not quite the proper word for expressing the effect which vastness and immensity have upon the mind. Reviewing the observations that have been made on this period, it might, I think, with advantage, be resolved into two sentences, somewhat after this manner: 'When we consider the works of nature and of art, as they are qualified to entertain the imagination, we shall find the latter very defective in comparison of the former. The works of art may sometimes appear no less beautiful or uncommon than those of nature; but they can have nothing of that vastness and immensity which so highly transport the mind of the beholder.'

'The one,' proceeds our author in the next sentence, 'may be as polite and delicate as the other; but can never shew herself so august and magnificent in the design.'

The 'one' and the 'other,' in the first part of this sentence, must unquestionably refer to the 'works of nature and of art.' For of these he had been speaking immediately before; and with reference to the plural word, 'works,' had employed the plural pronoun 'they.' But in the course of the sentence, he drops this construction; and passes every incongruously to the personification of art—'can never shew herself.'—To render his style consistent, 'art,' and not 'the works of art,' should have been made the nominative in

this sentence—'Art may be as polite and delicate as nature, but can never shew herself.'—'Polite' is a term oftener applied to persons and to manners, than to things; and is employed to signify their being highly civilized. Polished, or refined, was the idea which the author had in view. Though the general turn of this sentence be elegant, yet, in order to render it perfect, I must observe that the concluding words, 'in the design,' should either have been altogether omitted, or something should have been properly opposed to them in the preceding member of the period, thus: 'Art may, in the execution, be as polished and delicate as nature; but in the design, can never shew herself so august and magnificent.'

'There is something more bold and masterly in the rough, careless strokes of nature, than in the nice touches and embellishments of art.'

This sentence is perfectly happy and elegant; and carries, in all the expressions, that 'curiosa felicitas' for which Mr. Addison is so often remarkable. 'Bold and masterly' are words applied with the utmost propriety. The 'strokes of nature' are finely opposed to the 'touches of art;' and the 'rough strokes' to the 'nice touches;' the former painting the freedom and ease of nature, and the other the diminutive exactness of art; while both are introduced before us as different performers, and their respective merits in execution very justly contrasted with each other.

'The beauties of the most stately garden or palace lie in a narrow compass, the imagination immediately runs them over, and requires something else to gratify her; but in the wide fields of nature, the sight wanders up and down without confinement, and is fed with an infinite variety of images, without any certain stint or number.'

This sentence is not altogether so correct and elegant as the former. It carries, however, in the main, the character of our author's style; not strictly accurate, but agreeable, easy, and unaffected; enlivened too with a slight personification of the imagination, which gives a gaiety to the period. Perhaps it had been better, if this personification of the imagination, with which the sentence is introduced, had been continued throughout, and not changed unnecessarily, and even improperly, into 'sight' in the second member, which is contrary both to unity and elegance. It might have stood thus—'the imagination immediately runs them over, and requires something else to gratify her; but in the wide fields of nature she wanders up and down without confinement.' The epithet 'stately,' which the author uses in the beginning of the sentence, is applicable, with more propriety, to 'palaces' than to 'gardens.' The close of the sentence, 'without any certain stint or number,' may be objected to, as both superfluous and ungraceful. It might perhaps have terminated better in this manner—'she is

fed with an infinite, variety of images, and wanders up and down without confinement.'

'For this reason, we always find the poet in love with a country life, where nature appears in the greatest perfection, and furnishes out all those scenes that are most apt to delight the imagination.'

There is nothing in this sentence to attract particular attention. One would think it was rather the 'country' than a 'country life,' on which the remark here made should rest. A 'country life' may be productive of simplicity of manners, and of other virtues; but it is to the 'country' itself, that the properties here mentioned belong, of displaying the beauties of nature, and furnishing those scenes which delight the imagination.

'But though there are several of these wild scenes that are more delightful than any artificial shows, yet we find the works of nature still more pleasant the more they resemble those of art; for in this case our pleasure rises from a double principle; from the agreeableness of the objects to the eye, and from their similitude to other objects: we are pleased as well with comparing their beauties as with surveying them, and can represent them to our minds either as copies or as originals. Hence it is, that we take delight in a prospect which is well laid out, and diversified with fields and meadows, woods and rivers; in those accidental landscapes of trees, clouds, and cities, that are sometimes found in the veins of marble, in the curious fretwork of rocks and grottos; and, in a word, in any thing that hath such a degree of variety and regularity as may seem the effect of design in what we call the works of chance.'

The style, in the two sentences which compose this paragraph, is smooth and perspicuous. It lies open, in some places, to criticism; but lest the reader should be tired of what he may consider as petty remarks, I shall pass over any which these sentences suggest; the rather too, as the idea which they present to us, of nature's resembling art, of art's being considered as an original, and nature as a copy, seems not very distinct nor well brought out, nor indeed very material to our author's purpose.

'If the products of nature rise in value, according as they more or less resemble those of art, we may be sure that artificial works receive a greater advantage from the resemblance of such as are natural; because here the similitude is not only pleasant, but the pattern more perfect.'

It is necessary to our present design to point out two considerable inaccuracies which occur in this sentence. 'If the products' (he had better have said the 'productions') 'of nature rise in value according as they more or less resemble those of art.'—Does he mean that these productions 'rise in value,' both according as they

'more resemble,' and as they 'less resemble,' those of art? His meaning, undoubtedly, is, that they rise in value only, according as they 'more resemble them:' and therefore either these words, 'or less,' must be struck out; or the sentence must run thus—'productions of nature rise or sink in value according as they more or less resemble.'—The present construction of the sentence has plainly been owing to hasty and careless writing.

The other inaccuracy is towards the end of the sentence, and serves to illustrate a rule which I formerly gave concerning the position of adverbs. The author says,—'because here, the similitude is not only pleasant, but the pattern more perfect.' Here, by the position of the adverb 'only,' we are led to imagine that he is going to give some other property of the similitude, that it is 'not only pleasant,' as he says, but more than pleasant; it is useful, or, on some account or other, valuable. Whereas, he is going to oppose another thing to the 'similitude' itself, and not to this property of its being 'pleasant;' and, therefore, the right collocation, beyond doubt, was, 'because here, not only the similitude is pleasant, but the pattern more perfect;' the contrast lying, not between 'pleasant' and 'more perfect,' but between 'similitude' and 'pattern.'—Much of the clearness and neatness of style depends on such attentions as these.

'The prettiest landscape I ever saw, was one drawn on the walls of a dark room, which stood opposite, on one side, to a navigable river, and, on the other, to a park. The experiment is very common in optics.'

In the description of the landscape which follows, Mr. Addison is abundantly happy; but in this introduction to it he is obscure and indistinct. One who had not seen the experiment of the camera obscura could comprehend nothing of what he meant. And even, after we understand what he points at, we are at some loss, whether to understand his description as of one continued landscape, or of two different ones, produced by the projection of two camera obscuras on opposite walls. The scene, which I am inclined to think Mr. Addison here refers to, is Greenwich Park, with the prospect of the Thames, as seen by a camera obscura, which is placed in a small room in the upper story of the Observatory; where I remember to have seen, many years ago, the whole scene here described, corresponding so much to Mr. Addison's account of it in this passage, that, at the time, it recalled it to my memory. As the Observatory stands in the middle of the Park, it overlooks, from one side, both the River and the Park; and the objects afterward mentioned, the ships, the trees, and the deer, are presented in one view, without needing any assistance from opposite walls. Put into plainer language, the sentence might run thus: 'The prettiest landscape I ever saw was one formed by a

camera obscura, a common optical instrument, on the wall of a dark room which overlooked a navigable river and a park.'

'Here you might discover the waves and fluctuations of the water in strong and proper colours, with the picture of a ship entering at one end, and sailing by degrees through the whole piece. On another, there appeared the green shadows of trees waving to and fro with the wind, and herds of deer among them in miniature, leaping about upon the wall.'

Bating one or two small inaccuracies, this is beautiful and lively painting. The principal inaccuracy lies in the connexion of the two sentences, 'Here,' and 'On another.' I suppose the author meant, on 'one side,' and 'on another side.' As it stands, 'another' is ungrammatical, having nothing to which it refers. But the fluctuations of the water, the ship entering and sailing on by degrees, the trees waving in the wind, and the herds of deer among them leaping about, is all very elegant, and gives a beautiful conception of the scene meant to be described.

'I must confess the novelty of such a sight may be one occasion of its pleasantness to the imagination; but certainly the chief reason is its near resemblance to nature; as it does not only, like other pictures, give the colour and figure, but the motions of the things it represents.'

In this sentence there is nothing remarkable, either to be praised or blamed. In the conclusion, instead of 'the things it represents,' the regularity of correct style requires 'the things which it represents.' In the beginning as 'one occasion' and the 'chief reason' are opposed to one another, I should think it better to have repeated the same word—'one reason of its pleasantness to the imagination, but certainly the chief reason is,' &c.

'We have before observed, that there is generally in nature something more grand and august than what we meet with in the curiosities of art. When, therefore, we see this imitated in any measure, it gives us a nobler and more exalted kind of pleasure than what we receive from the nicer and more accurate productions of art.'

It would have been better to have avoided terminating these two sentences in a manner so similar to each other; 'curiosities of art —productions of art.'

'On this account, our English gardens are not so entertaining to the fancy as those in France and Italy, where we see a large extent of ground covered with an agreeable mixture of garden and forest, which represent every where an artificial rudeness, much more charming than that neatness and elegance which we meet with in those of our own country.'

The expression—'represent every where an artificial rudeness,' is so inaccurate, that I am inclined to think, what stood in Mr. Addison's manuscript must have been—'present every where.'

—For the mixture of garden and forest does not 'represent,' but actually 'exhibits' or 'presents,' artificial rudeness. That mixture 'represents' indeed 'natural rudeness,' that is, is designed to imitate it; but it in reality 'is,' and 'presents, artificial rudeness.'

'It might indeed be of ill consequence to the public, as well as unprofitable to private persons, to alienate so much ground from pasturage and the plough, in many parts of a country that is so well peopled and cultivated to a far greater advantage. But why may not a whole estate be thrown into a kind of garden by frequent plantations, that may turn as much to the profit as the pleasure of the owner? A marsh overgrown with willows, or a mountain shaded with oaks, are not only more beautiful, but more beneficial, than when they lie bare and unadorned. Fields of corn make a pleasant prospect; and if the walks were a little taken care of that lie between them, and the natural embroidery of the meadows were helped and improved by some small additions of art, and the several rows of hedges were set off by trees and flowers that the soil was capable of receiving, a man might make a pretty landscape of his own possessions.'

The ideas here are just, and the style is easy and perspicuous, though in some places bordering on the careless. In that passage, for instance, 'if the walks were a little taken care of that lie between them'—one member is clearly out of its place, and the turn of the phrase, 'a little taken care of,' is vulgar and colloquial. Much better if it had run thus—'if a little care were bestowed on the walks that lie between them.'

'Writers who have given us an account of China tell us, the inhabitants of that country laugh at the plantations of our Europeans, which are laid out by the rule and the line; because, they say, any one may place trees in equal rows and uniform figures. They choose rather to shew a genius in works of this nature, and therefore always conceal the art by which they direct themselves. They have a word, it seems, in their language, by which they express the particular beauty of a plantation, that thus strikes the imagination, at first sight, without discovering what it is that has so agreeable an effect.'

These sentences furnish occasion for no remark, except that in the last of them, 'particular' is improperly used instead of 'peculiar'—'the peculiar beauty of a plantation, that thus strikes the imagination,' was the phrase to have conveyed the idea which the author meant; namely, the beauty which distinguishes it from plantations of another kind.

'Our British gardeners, on the contrary, instead of humouring nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our trees rise in cones, globes, and pyramids. We see the marks of the scissars on every plant and bush.'

These sentences are lively and elegant. They make an agreeable diversity from the strain of those which went before; and are marked with the hand of Mr. Addison. I have to remark only, that, in the phrase, 'instead of humouring nature love to deviate from it'—'humouring' and 'deviating,' are terms not properly opposed to each other; a sort of personification of nature is begun in the first of them which is not supported in the second.—To 'humouring,' was to have been opposed 'thwarting'—or if 'deviating' was kept, 'following' or 'going along with, nature,' was to have been used.

'I do not know whether I am singular in my opinion, but, for my own part, I would rather look upon a tree, in all its luxuriancy and diffusion of boughs and branches, than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a mathematical figure; and cannot but fancy that an orchard in flower, looks infinitely more delightful, than all the little labyrinths of the most finished parterre.'

This sentence is extremely harmonious, and every way beautiful. It carries all the characteristics of our author's natural, graceful, and flowing language.—A tree, 'in all its luxuriancy and diffusion of boughs and branches,' is a remarkably happy expression. The author seems to become luxuriant in describing an object which is so, and thereby renders the sound a perfect echo to the sense.

'But as our great modellers of gardens have their magazines of plants to dispose of, it is very natural in them, to tear up all the beautiful plantations of fruit-trees, and contrive a plan that may most turn to their profit, in taking off their evergreens, and the like moveable plants, with which their shops are plentifully stocked.'

An author should always study to conclude, when it is in his power, with grace and dignity. It is somewhat unfortunate, that this paper did not end, as it might very well have done, with the former beautiful period. The impression left on the mind by the beauties of nature with which he had been entertaining us, would then have been more agreeable. But in this sentence there is a great falling off; and we return with pain from those pleasing objects, to the insignificant contents of a nursery-man's shop.

LECTURE XXIV.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN A PASSAGE OF DEAN SWIFT'S WRITINGS.

My design in the four preceding Lectures, was not merely to appreciate the merit of Mr. Addison's style, by pointing out the faults and the beauties that are mingled in the writings of that great

author. They were not composed with any view to gain the reputation of a critic; but intended for the assistance of such as are desirous of studying the most proper and elegant construction of sentences in the English language To such, it is hoped, they may be of advantage; as the proper application of rules respecting style will always be best learned by means of the illustration which examples afford. I conceive that examples, taken from the writings of an author so justly esteemed, would, on that account, not only be more attended to, but would also produce this good effect, of familiarizing those who study composition with the style of a writer, from whom they may, upon the whole, derive great benefit. With the same view, I shall, in this Lecture, give one critical exercise more of the same kind, upon the style of an author of a different character, Dean Swift; repeating the intimation I gave formerly, that such as stand in need of no assistance of this kind, and who, therefore, will naturally consider such minute discussions concerning the propriety of words, and structure of sentences, as beneath their attention, had best pass over what will seem to them a tedious part of the work.

I formerly gave the general character of Dean Swift's style. He is esteemed one of our most correct writers. His style is of the plain and simple kind; free from all affectation, and all superfluity; perspicuous, manly, and pure. These are its advantages. But we are not to look for much ornament and grace in it.* On the contrary, Dean Swift seems to have slighted and despised the ornaments of language, rather than to have studied them. His arrangement is often loose and negligent. In elegant, musical, and figurative language, he is much inferior to Mr. Addison. His manner of writing carries in it the character of one who rests altogether upon his sense, and aims at no more than giving his meaning in a clear and concise manner.

That part of his writings which I shall now examine, is the beginning of his treatise, entitled, 'A Proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English Tongue,' in a Letter addressed to the Earl of Oxford, then lord high treasurer. I was led, by the nature of the subject, to choose this treatise; but in justice to the Dean, I must observe, that, after having examined it, I do not esteem it one of his most correct productions; but am apt to think it has been more hastily composed than some other of them. It

* I am glad to find, that, in my judgment concerning this author's composition, I have coincided with the opinion of a very able critic: 'This easy and safe conveyance of meaning, it was Swift's desire to attain, and for having attained, he certainly deserves praise, though, perhaps, not the highest praise. For purposes merely didactic, when something is to be told that was not known before, it is in the highest degree proper: but against that inattention by which known truths are suffered to be neglected, it makes no provision; it instructs, but does not persuade.' Johnson's Lives of the Poets; in Swift.

bears the title and form of a letter: but it is, however, in truth, a treatise designed for the public; and therefore in examining it, we cannot proceed upon the indulgence due to an epistolary correspondence. When a man addresses himself to a friend only, it is sufficient if he makes himself fully understood by him; but when an author writes for the public, whether he employ the form of an epistle or not, we are always entitled to expect, that he shall express himself with accuracy and care. Our author begins thus:

'What I had the honour of mentioning to your lordship, some time ago, in conversation, was not a new thought, just then started by accident or occasion, but the result of long reflection; and I have been confirmed in my sentiments by the opinion of some very judicious persons with whom I consulted.'

The disposition of circumstances in a sentence, such as serve to limit or to qualify some assertion, or to denote time and place, I formerly shewed to be a matter of nicety; and I observed, that it ought to be always held a rule, not to crowd such circumstances together, but rather to intermix them with more capital words, in such different parts of the sentence as can admit them naturally. Here are two circumstances of this kind placed together, which had better have been separated. 'Some time ago, in conversation'—better thus:—'What I had the honour, some time ago, of mentioning to your lordship in conversation'—'was not a new thought,' proceeds our author, 'started by accident or occasion:' the different meaning of these two words may not at first occur. They have, however, a distinct meaning, and are properly used: for it is one very laudable property of our author's style, that it is seldom encumbered with superfluous, synonymous words. 'Started by accident,' is fortuitously, or at random; started 'by occasion,' is by some incident which at that time gave birth to it. His meaning is, that it was not a new thought which either casually sprung up in his mind, or was suggested to him, for the first time, by the train of the discourse: but, as he adds, 'was the result of long reflection.'—He proceeds:

'They all agreed, that nothing would be of greater use towards the improvement of knowledge and politeness, than some effectual method for correcting, enlarging, and ascertaining our language; and they think it a work very possible to be compassed under the protection of a prince, the countenance and encouragement of a ministry, and the care of proper persons chosen for such an undertaking.'

This is an excellent sentence; clear and elegant. The words are all simple, well-chosen, and expressive; and arranged in the most proper order. It is a harmonious period too, which is a beauty not frequent in our author. The last part of it consists of

three members, which gradually rise and swell above one another, without any affected or unsuitable pomp;—'under the protection of a prince, the countenance and encouragement of a ministry, and the care of proper persons chosen for such an undertaking.' We may remark, in the beginning of the sentence, the proper use of the preposition 'towards'—'greater use towards the improvement of knowledge and politeness'—importing the pointing or tendency of any thing to a certain end; which could not have been so well expressed by the preposition 'for,' commonly employed in place of 'towards,' by authors who are less attentive than Dean Swift was to the force of words.

One fault might, perhaps, be found both with this and the former sentence, considered as introductory ones. We expect, that an introduction is to unfold, clearly and directly, the subject that is to be treated of. In the first sentence our author had told us of a thought he mentioned to his lordship, in conversation, which had been the result of long reflection, and concerning which he had consulted judicious persons. But what that thought was, we are never told directly. We gather it indeed from the second sentence, wherein he informs us in what these judicious persons agreed; namely, that some method for improving the language was both useful and practicable. But this indirect method of opening the subject would have been very faulty in a regular treatise; though the ease of the epistolary form, which our author here assumes in addressing his patron, may excuse it in the present case

'I was glad to find your lordship's answer in so different a style from what hath commonly been made use of, on the like occasions, for some years past; "That all such thoughts must be deferred to a time of peace;" a topic which some have carried so far, that they would not have us, by any means, think of preserving our civil and religious constitution, because we are engaged in a war abroad.'

This sentence also is clear and elegant; only there is one inaccuracy, when he speaks of his lordship's 'answer' being in so different a style from what had formerly been used. His answer to what? or to whom? For, from any thing going before, it does not appear that any application or address had been made to his lordship by those persons, whose opinion was mentioned in the preceding sentence; and to whom the answer, here spoken of, naturally refers. There is a little indistinctness, as I before observed, in our author's manner of introducing his subject here. We may observe too, that the phrase—'glad to find your answer in so different a style'—though abundantly suited to the language of conversation, or of a familiar letter, yet, in regular composition, requires an additional word—'glad to find your answer run in so different a style.

'It will be among the distinguishing marks of your ministry, my lord, that you have a genius above all such regards, and that no reasonable proposal, for the honour, the advantage, or ornament, of your country, however foreign to your immediate office, was ever neglected by you.'

The phrase—'a genius above all such regards,' both seems somewhat harsh, and does not clearly express what the author means, namely, the 'confined views' of those who neglected every thing that belonged to the arts of peace in the time of war.—Except this expression, there is nothing that can be subject to the least reprehension, in this sentence, nor in all that follows, to the end of the paragraph.

I confess the merit of this candour and condescension is very much lessened, because your lordship hardly leaves us room to offer our good wishes; removing all our difficulties, and supplying our wants, faster than the most visionary projector can adjust his schemes. And therefore, my lord, the design of this paper is not so much to offer you ways and means, as to complain of a grievance, the redressing of which is to be your own work, as much as that of paying the nation's debts, or opening a trade into the South Sea; and though not of such immediate benefit as either of these, or any other of your glorious actions, yet, perhaps, in future ages not less to your honour.'

The compliments which the Dean here pays to his patron are very high and strained; and shew, that with all his surliness, he was as capable, on some occasions, of making his court to a great man by flattery, as other writers. However, with respect to the style, which is the sole object of our present consideration, every thing here, as far as appears to me, is faultless. In these sentences, and indeed throughout this paragraph in general, which we have now ended, our author's style appears to great advantage. We see that ease and simplicity, that correctness and distinctness, which particularly characterise it. It is very remarkable how few Latinized words Dean Swift employs. No writer, in our language, is so purely English as he is, or borrows so little assistance from words of foreign derivation. From none can we take a better model of the choice and proper significancy of words. It is remarkable, in the sentences we have now before us, how plain all the expressions are, and yet, at the same time, how significant; and in the midst of that high strain of compliment into which he rises, how little there is of pomp, or glare of expression. How very few writers can preserve this manly temperance of style; or would think a compliment of this nature supported with sufficient dignity, unless they had embellished it with some of those high-sounding words, whose chief effect is no other than to give their language a stiff and forced appearance.

'My lord, I do here, in the name of all the learned and polite persons of the nation, complain to your lordship as first minister, that our language is extremely imperfect; that its daily improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily corruptions; that the pretenders, to polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied abuses and absurdities; and that, in many instances, it offends against every part of grammar.'

The turn of this sentence is extremely elegant. He had spoken before of a grievance for which he sought redress, and he carries on the allusion, by entering here directly on his subject, in the style of a public representation presented to the minister of state. One imperfection, however, there is in this sentence, which, luckily for our purpose, serves to illustrate a rule before given concerning the position of adverbs, so as to avoid ambiguity. It is in the middle of the sentence;—'that the pretenders to polish and refine it have chiefly multiplied abuses and absurdities.'—Now concerning the import of this adverb, 'chiefly,' I ask, whether it signifies that these pretenders to polish the language have been the 'chief persons' who have multiplied its abuses, in distinction from others; or that the 'chief thing' which these pretenders have done, is to multiply the abuses of our language, in opposition to their 'doing any thing to refine it?' These two meanings are really different; and yet, by the position which the word 'chiefly' has in the sentence, we are left at a loss in which to understand it. The construction would lead us rather to the latter sense; that the chief thing which these pretenders have done, is to multiply the abuses of our language. But it is more than probable, that the former sense was what the Dean intended, as it carries more of his usual satirical edge; 'that the pretended refiners of our language were, in fact, its chief corruptors;' on which supposition, his words ought to have run thus: 'that the pretenders to polish and refine it, have been the chief persons to multiply its abuses and absurdities;' which would have rendered the sense perfectly clear.

Perhaps, too, there might be ground for observing farther upon this sentence, that as language is the object with which it sets out; 'that our language is extremely imperfect;' and as there follows an enumeration concerning language, in three particulars, it had been better if language had been kept the ruling word, or the nominative to every verb, without changing the construction, by making 'pretenders' the ruling word, as is done in the second member of the enumeration, and then, in the third, returning again to the former word, 'language'—'That the pretenders to polish—and that, in many instances, it offends.'—I am persuaded, that the structure of the sentence would have been more neat and happy, and its unity more complete, if the members of it had been arranged thus: 'That our language is extremely imperfect; that its daily improvements

are by no means in proportion to its daily corruptions; that, in many instances, it offends against every part of grammar; and that the pretenders to polish and refine it, have been the chief persons to multiply its abuses and absurdities.'—This degree of attention seemed proper to be bestowed on such a sentence as this, in order to shew how it might have been conducted after the most perfect manner. Our author, after having said,

'Lest your lordship should think my censure too severe, I shall take leave to be more particular;' proceeds in the following paragraph:

'I believe your lordship will agree with me in the reason why our language is less refined than those of Italy, Spain, or France.'

I am sorry to say, that now we shall have less to commend in our author. For the whole of this paragraph, on which we are entering, is, in truth, perplexed and inaccurate. Even, in this short sentence, we may discern an inaccuracy—'why our language is less refined than those of Italy, Spain, or France;' putting the pronoun 'those' in the plural, when the antecedent substantive to which it refers, is in the singular, 'our language.' Instances of this kind may sometimes be found in English authors; but they sound harsh to the ear, and are certainly contrary to the purity of grammar. By a very little attention, this inaccuracy might have been remedied, and the sentence have been made to run much better in this way; 'why our language is less refined than the Italian, Sparish, or French.'

'It is plain, that the Latin tongue, in its purity, was never in this island; towards the conquest of which, few or no attempts were made till the time of Claudius; neither was that language ever so vulgar in Britian, as it is known to have been in Gaul and Spain.'

To say, that 'the Latin tongue, in its purity, was never in this island,' is very careless style: it ought to have been, 'was never spoken in this island.' In the progress of the sentence, he means to give a reason why the Latin was never spoken in its purity amongst us, because our island was not conquered by the Romans till after the purity of their tongue began to decline. But this reason ought to have been brought out more clearly. This might easily have been done, and the relation of the several parts of the sentence to each other much better pointed out by means of a small variation; thus: 'It is plain, that the Latin tongue, in its purity, was never spoken in this island, as few or no attempts towards the conquest of it were made till the time of Claudius.' He adds, 'Neither was that language ever so vulgar in Britain.'—'Vulgar' was one of the worst words he could have chosen for expressing what he means here; namely, that the Latin tongue was at no time so 'general,' or so much in 'common use,' in Britain as it is known to have been in Gaul and Spain.—'Vulgar,' when

applied to language, commonly signifies impure or debased language, such as is spoken by the low people, which is quite opposite to the author's sense here; for, instead of meaning to say, that the Latin spoken in Britain was not so debased, as what was spoken in Gaul and Spain; he means just the contrary, and had been telling us, that we never were acquainted with the Latin at all, till its purity began to be corrupted.

'Farther, we find that the Roman legions here were at length all recalled to help their country against the Goths, and other barbarous invaders.'

The chief scope of this sentence is, to give a reason why the Latin tongue did not strike any deep root in this island, on account of the short continuance of the Romans in it. He goes on:—

'Meantime the Britons, left to shift for themselves, and daily harassed by cruel inroads from the Picts, were forced to call in the Saxons for their defence; who, consequently, reduced the greatest part of the island to their own power, drove the Britons into the most remote and mountainous parts, and the rest of the country, in customs, religion, and language, became wholly Saxon.'

This is a very exceptionable sentence. First, the phrase 'left to shift for themselves,' is rather a low phrase, and too much in the familiar style to be proper in a grave treatise. Next, as the sentence advances—'forced to call in the Saxons for their defence, who, consequently, reduced the greatest part of the island to their own power.'—What is the meaning of 'consequently' here? If it means 'afterward,' or 'in progress of time,' this, certainly, is not a sense in which 'consequently' is often taken; and therefore the expression is chargeable with obscurity. The adverb 'consequently,' in its most common acceptation, denotes one thing following from another, as an effect from a cause. If he uses it in this sense, and means that the Britons being subdued by the Saxons, was a necessary consequence of their having called in these Saxons to their assistance, this consequence is drawn too abruptly, and needed more explanation. For though it has often happened, that nations have been subdued by their own auxiliaries, yet this is not a consequence of such a nature that it can be assumed, as seems here to be done, for a first and self-evident principle.—But farther, what shall we say to this phrase, 'reduced the greatest part of the island to their own power?' we say, 'reduce to rule, reduce to practice'—we can say, that 'one nation reduces another to subjection.'—But when 'dominion' or 'power' is used, we always, as far as I know, say, 'reduce under their power.' 'Reduce to their power,' is so harsh and uncommon an expression, that, though Dean Swift's authority in language be very great, yet, in the use of this phrase, I am of opinion that it would not be safe to follow his example.

Besides these particular inaccuracies, this sentence is chargeable with want of unity in the composition of the whole. The persons and the scene are too often changed upon us.—First, the Britons are mentioned, who are harassed by inroads from the Picts; next, the Saxons appear, who subdue the greatest part of the island, and drive the Britons into the mountains; and lastly, the rest of the country is introduced, and a description given of the change made upon it. All this forms a group of various objects, presented in such quick succession, that the mind finds it difficult to comprehend them under one view. Accordingly, it is quoted in the 'Elements of Criticism,' as an instance of a sentence rendered faulty by the breach of unity.

'This I take to be the reason why there are more Latin words remaining in the British than the old Saxon; which, excepting some few variations in the orthography, is the same in most original words with our present English, as well as with the German and other northern dialects.'

This sentence is faulty, somewhat, in the same manner with the last. It is loose in the connexion of its parts; and, besides this, it is also too loosely connected with the preceding sentence. What he had there said, concerning the Saxons expelling the Britons, and changing the customs, the religion, and the language of the country, is a clear and good reason for our present language being Saxon rather than British. This is the inference which we would naturally expect him to draw from the premises just before laid down: but when he tells us, that 'this is the reason why there are more Latin words remaining in the British tongue than in the old Saxon,' we are presently at a stand. No reason for this inference appears. If it can be gathered at all from the foregoing deduction, it is gathered only imperfectly. For as he had told us that the Britons had 'some' connexion with the Romans, he should have also told us, in order to make out his inference, that the Saxons never had 'any.' The truth is, the whole of this paragraph, concerning the influence of the Latin tongue upon ours, is careless, perplexed, and obscure. His argument required to have been more fully unfolded, in order to make it be distinctly apprehended, and to give it its due force. In the next paragraph he proceeds to discourse concerning the influence of the French tongue upon our language. The style becomes more clear, though not remarkable for great beauty or elegance.

'Edward the Confessor, having lived long in France, appears to be the first who introduced any mixture of the French tongue with the Saxon; the court affecting what the prince was fond of, and others taking it up for a fashion, as it is now with us. William the Conqueror proceeded much farther, bringing over with him vast numbers of that nation, scattering them in every monastery,

giving them great quantities of land, directing all pleadings to be in that language, and endeavouring to make it universal in the kingdom.'

On these two sentences, I have nothing of moment to observe. The sense is brought out clearly, and in simple, unaffected language.

'This, at least, is the opinion generally received; but your lordship hath fully convinced me, that the French tongue made yet a greater progress here under Harry the Second, who had large territories on that continent both from his father and his wife; made frequent journeys and expeditions thither; and was always attended with a number of his countrymen, retainers at court.'

In the beginning of this sentence, our author states an opposition between an opinion generally received, and that of his lordship; and in compliment to his patron, he tells us, that his lordship had convinced him of somewhat that differed from the general opinion. Thus one must naturally understand his words: 'This, at least, is the opinion generally received; but your lordship hath fully convinced me'—Now here there must be an inaccuracy of expression. For, on examining what went before, there appears no sort of opposition betwixt the generally received opinion, and that of the author's patron. The general opinion was, that William the Conqueror had proceeded much farther than Edward the Confessor, in propagating the French language, and had endeavoured to make it universal. Lord Oxford's opinion was, that the French tongue had gone on to make a yet greater progress under Harry the Second, than it had under his predecessor William: which two opinions are as entirely consistent with each other as any can be; and therefore the opposition here affected to be stated between them, by the adversative particle 'but,' was improper and groundless.

'For some centuries after, there was a constant intercourse between France and England, by the dominions we possessed there, and the conquests we made; so that our language, between two and three hundred years ago, seems to have had a greater mixture with French than at present; many words having been afterward rejected, and some since the days of Spenser; although we have still retained not a few, which have been long antiquated in France.'

This is a sentence too long and intricate, and liable to the same objection that was made to a former one, for want of unity. It consists of four members, each divided from the subsequent by a semicolon. In going along, we naturally expect the sentence is to end at the second of these, or, at farthest, at the third; when, to our surprise, a new member of the period makes its appearance, and fatigues our attention in joining all the parts together. Such a structure of a sentence is always the mark of careless writing. In

the first member of the sentence, 'a constant intercourse between France and England, by the dominions we possessed there, and the conquests we made,' the construction is not sufficiently filled up. In place of 'intercourse by the dominions we possessed,' it should have been—'by reason of the dominions we possessed'—or—'occasioned by the dominions we possessed'—and in place of—'the dominions we possessed there, and the conquests we made,' the regular style is—'the dominions which we possessed there, and the conquests which we made.' The relative pronoun 'which' is indeed in phrases of this kind sometimes omitted: but when it is omitted, the style becomes elliptic; and though in conversation, or in the very light and easy kinds of writing, such elliptic style may not be improper, yet in grave and regular writing, it is better to fill up the construction, and insert the relative pronoun. After having said—'I could produce several instances of both kinds, if it were of any use or entertainment'—our author begins the next paragraph thus:

'To examine into the several circumstances by which the language of a country may be altered, would force me to enter into a wide field.'

There is nothing remarkable in this sentence, unless that here occurs the first instance of a metaphor since the beginning of this treatise; 'entering into a wide field,' being put for beginning an extensive subject. Few writers deal less in figurative language than Swift. I before observed, that he appears to despise ornaments of this kind; and though this renders his style somewhat dry on serious subjects, yet his plainness and simplicity, I must not forbear to remind my readers, is far preferable to an ostentatious and affected parade of ornament.

'I shall only observe, that the Latin, the French, and the English, seem to have undergone the same fortune. The first, from the days of Romulus to those of Julius Cæsar, suffered perpetual changes; and by what we meet in those authors who occasionally speak on that subject, as well as from certain fragments of old laws, it is manifest, that the Latin, three hundred years before Tully, was as unintelligible in his time, as the French and English of the same period are now; and these two have changed as much since William the Conqueror (which is but little less than seven hundred years), as the Latin appears to have done in the like term.'

The Dean plainly appears to be writing negligently here. This sentence is one of that involved and intricate kind, of which some instances have occurred before; but none worse than this. It requires a very distinct head to comprehend the whole meaning of the period at first reading. In one part of it we find extreme carelessness of expression. He says, 'it is manifest that the Latin, three hundred years before Tully, was as unintelligible in his time,

as the English and French of the same period are now.' By the English and French 'of the same period,' must naturally be understood 'the English and French that were spoken three hundred years before Tully.' This is the only grammatical meaning his words will bear; and yet assuredly what he means, and what it would have been easy for him to have expressed with more precision, is, 'the English and French that were spoken three hundred years ago;' or at a period equally distant from our age, as the old Latin, which he had mentioned, was from the age of Tully. But when an author writes hastily, and does not review with proper care what he has written, many such inaccuracies will be apt to creep into his style.

'Whether our language or the French will decline as fast as the Roman did, is a question that would perhaps admit more debate than it is worth. There were many reasons for the corruptions of the last; as the change of their government to a tyranny, which ruined the study of eloquence, there being no farther use or encouragement for popular orators; their giving not only the freedom of the city, but capacity for employments, to several towns in Gaul, Spain, and Germany, and other distant parts, as far as Asia, which brought a great number of foreign pretenders to Rome; the slavish disposition of the senate and people, by which the wit and eloquence of the age were wholly turned into panegyric, the most barren of all subjects; the great corruption of manners, and introduction of foreign luxury, with foreign terms to express it; with several others that might be assigned; not to mention the invasions from the Goths and Vandals, which are too obvious to insist on.'

In the enumeration here made of the causes contributing towards the corruption of the Roman language, there are many inaccuracies ---'The change of their government to a tyranny'---of whose government? He had indeed been speaking of the Roman language, and therefore we guess at his meaning: but the style is ungrammatical; for he had not mentioned the Romans themselves; and therefore, when he says 'their government,' there is no antecedent in the sentence to which the pronoun, 'their,' can refer with any propriety.---'Giving the capacity for employments to several towns in Gaul,' is a questionable expression. For though towns are sometimes put for the people who inhabit them, yet to give a town 'the capacity for employments,' sounds harsh and uncouth. 'The wit and eloquence of the age wholly turned into panegyric,' is a phrase which does not well express the meaning. Neither wit nor eloquence can be turned into panegyric; but they may be turned 'towards panegyric,' or 'employed in panegyric,' which was the sense the author had in view.

The conclusion of the enumeration is visibly incorrect—'The

great corruption of manners, and introduction of foreign luxury, with foreign terms to express it, with several others that might be assigned'—He means, 'with several other reasons.' The word 'reasons,' had indeed been mentioned before; but as it stands at the distance of thirteen lines backward, the repetition of it here became indispensable, in order to avoid ambiguity. 'Not to mention,' he adds, 'the invasions from the Goths and Vandals, which are too obvious to insist on.' One would imagine him to mean, that the invasions from the Goths and Vandals are 'historical facts' too well known and obvious to be insisted on. But he means quite a different thing, though he has not taken the proper method of expressing it, through his haste, probably, to finish the paragraph; namely, that these invasions from the Goths and Vandals 'were causes of the corruption of the Roman Language too obvious to be insisted on.'

I shall not pursue this criticism any farther. I have been obliged to point out many inaccuracies in the passage which we have considered. But in order that my observations may not be construed as meant to depreciate the style or the writings of Dean Swift below their just value, there are two remarks which I judge it necessary to make before concluding this Lecture. One is, that it were unfair to estimate an author's style on the whole, by some passage in his writings, which chances to be composed in a careless manner. This is the case with respect to this treatise, which has much the appearance of a hasty production; though, as I before observed, it was by no means on that account that I pitched upon it for the subject of this exercise. But after having examined it, I am sensible that, in many other of his writings, the Dean is more accurate.

My other observation, which is equally applicable to Dean Swift and Mr. Addison, is, that there may be writers much freer from such inaccuracies, as I have had occasion to point out in these two, whose style, however, upon the whole, may not have half their merit. Refinement in language has, of late years, begun to be much attended to. In several modern productions of very small value, I should find it difficult to point out many errors in language. The words might probably be all proper words, correctly and clearly arranged, and the turn of the sentence sonorous and musical; whilst yet the style, upon the whole, might deserve no praise. The fault often lies in what may be called the general cast or complexion of the style; which a person of a good taste discerns to be vicious; to be feeble, for instance, and diffuse; flimsy or affected; petulant or ostentatious; though the faults cannot be so easily pointed out and particularised, as when they lie in some erroneous or negligent construction of a sentence. Whereas, such writers as Addison and Swift carry always those general characters of good

style which, in the midst of their occasional negligences, every person of good taste must discern and approve. We see their faults overbalanced by higher beauties. We see a writer of sense and reflection expressing his sentiments without affectation; attentive to thoughts as well as to words; and, in the main current of his language, elegant and beautiful; and therefore, the only proper use to be made of the blemishes which occur in the writings of such authors, is to point out to those who apply themselves to the study of composition, some of the rules which they ought to observe for avoiding such errors; and to render them sensible of the necessity of strict attention to language and to style. Let them imitate the ease and simplicity of those great authors; let them study to be always natural, and, as far as they can, always correct in their expressions; let them endeavour to be, at some times, lively and striking; but carefully avoid being at any time ostentatious and affected.

LECTURE XXV.

ELOQUENCE, OR PUBLIC SPEAKING---HISTORY OF ELOQUENCE---GRECIAN ELOQUENCE---DEMOSTHENES.

Having finished that part of the course which relates to language and style, we are now to ascend a step higher, and to examine the subjects upon which style is employed. I begin with what is properly called Eloquence, or Public Speaking. In treating of this I am to consider the different kinds and subjects of public speaking; the manner suited to each; the proper distribution and management of all the parts of a discourse; and the proper pronunciation or delivery of it. But before I enter on any of these heads, it may be proper to take a view of the nature of eloquence in general, and of the state in which it has subsisted in different ages and countries. This will lead into some detail; but I hope a useful one; as in every art it is of great consequence to have a just idea of the perfection of that art, of the end at which it aims, and of the progress which it has made among mankind.

Of eloquence, in particular, it is the more necessary to ascertain the proper notion, because there is not any thing concerning which false notions have been more prevalent. Hence, it has been so often, and is still at this day, in disrepute with many. When you speak to a plain man of eloquence, or in praise of it, he is apt to hear you with very little attention. He conceives eloquence to signify a certain trick of speech; the art of varnishing weak arguments plausibly; or of speaking so as to please and tickle the ear. 'Give me good sense,' says he, 'and keep your eloquence

for boys.' He is in the right, if eloquence were what he conceives it to be. It would be then a very contemptible art indeed, below the study of any wise or good man. But nothing can be more remote from truth. To be truly eloquent is to speak to the purpose. For the best definition which, I think, can be given of eloquence is the art of speaking in such a manner as to attain the end for which we speak. Whenever a man speaks or writes, he is supposed, as a rational being, to have some end in view; either to inform, or to amuse, or to persuade, or, in some way or other, to act upon his fellow-creatures. He who speaks or writes, in such a manner as to adapt all his words most effectually to that end, is the most eloquent man. Whatever then the subject be, there is room for eloquence; in history, or even in philosophy, as well as in orations. The definition which I have given of eloquence, comprehends all the different kinds of it; whether calculated to instruct, to persuade, or to please. But as the most important subject of discourse is action, or conduct, the power of eloquence chiefly appears when it is employed to influence conduct, and persuade to action. As it is principally with reference to this end, that it becomes the object of art, eloquence may, under this view of it, be defined, the art of persuasion.

This being once established, certain consequences immediately follow, which point out the fundamental maxims of the art. It follows clearly, that in order to persuade, the most essential requisites are, solid argument, clear method, a character of probity appearing in the speaker, joined with such graces of style and utterance as shall draw our attention to what he says. Good sense is the foundation of all. No man can be truly eloquent without it; for fools can persuade none but fools. In order to persuade a man of sense, you must first convince him; which is only to be done, by satisfying his understanding of the reasonableness of what you propose to him.

This leads me to observe, that convincing and persuading, though they are sometimes confounded, import, notwithstanding, different things, which it is necessary for us, at present, to distinguish from each other. Conviction affects the understanding only; persuasion, the will and the practice. It is the business of the philosopher to convince me of truth; it is the business of the orator to persuade me to act agreeably to it, by engaging my affections on its side. Conviction and persuasion do not always go together. They *ought*, indeed, to go together; and *would* do so, if our inclination regularly followed the dictates of our understanding. But as our nature is constituted, I may be convinced that virtue, justice, or public spirit, are laudable, while at the same time, I am not persuaded to act according to them. The inclination may revolt, though the understanding be satisfied; the passions may

prevail against the judgment. Conviction is, however, always one avenue to the inclination, or heart; and it is that which an orator must first bend his strength to gain; for no persuasion is likely to be stable which is not founded on conviction. But, in order to persuade, the orator must go farther than merely producing conviction; he must consider man as a creature moved by many different springs, and must act upon them all. He must address himself to the passions; he must paint to the fancy, and touch the heart; and hence, besides solid argument, and clear method, all the conciliating and interesting arts, both of composition and pronunciation, enter into the idea of eloquence.

An objection may, perhaps, hence be formed against eloquence, as an art which may be employed for persuading to ill as well as to good. There is no doubt that it may; and so reasoning may also be, and too often is employed, for leading men into error. But who would think of forming an argument from this against the cultivation of our reasoning powers? Reason, eloquence, and every art which ever has been studied among mankind, may be abused, and may prove dangerous in the hands of bad men; but it were perfectly childish to contend, that, upon this account, they ought to be abolished. Give truth and virtue the same arms which you give vice and falsehood, and the former are likely to prevail. Eloquence is no invention of the schools. Nature teaches every man to be eloquent, when he is much in earnest. Place him in some critical situation; let him have some great interest at stake, and you will see him lay hold of the most effectual means of persuasion. The art of oratory proposes nothing more than to follow out that track which nature has first pointed out. And the more exactly that this track is pursued, the more that eloquence is properly studied, the more shall we be guarded against the abuse which bad men make of it, and enabled the better to distinguish between true eloquence and the tricks of sophistry.

We may distinguish three kinds, or degrees, of eloquence. The first, and lowest, is that which aims only at pleasing the hearers. Such, generally, is the eloquence of panegyrics, inaugural orations, addresses to great men, and other harangues of this sort. This ornamental sort of composition is not altogether to be rejected. It may innocently amuse and entertain the mind; and it may be mixed, at the same time, with very useful sentiments. But it must be confessed, that where the speaker has no farther aim than merely to shine, and to please, there is great danger of art being strained into ostentation, and of the composition becoming tiresome and languid.

A second and higher degree of eloquence is when the speaker aims not merely to please, but also to inform, to instruct, to convince: when his art is exerted in removing prejudices against him-

self and his cause, in choosing the most proper arguments, stating them with the greatest force, arranging them in the best order, expressing and delivering them with propriety and beauty; and thereby disposing us to pass that judgment, or embrace that side of the cause, to which he seeks to bring us. Within this compass, chiefly, is employed the eloquence of the bar.

But there is a third, and still higher degree of eloquence, wherein a greater power is exerted over the human mind; by which we are not only convinced, but are interested, agitated, and carried along with the speaker; our passions are made to rise together with his; we enter into all his emotions; we love, we detest, we resent, according as he inspires us; and are prompted to resolve, or to act, with vigour and warmth. Debate, in popular assemblies, opens the most illustrious field to this species of eloquence; and the pulpit, also, admits it.

I am here to observe, and the observation is of consequence, that the high eloquence which I have last mentioned, is always the offspring of passion. By passion, I mean that state of the mind in which it is agitated, and fired, by some object it has in view. A man may convince, and even persuade others to act, by mere reason and argument. But that degree of eloquence which gains the admiration of mankind, and properly denominates one an orator, is never found without warmth or passion. Passion, when in such a degree as to rouse and kindle the mind, without throwing it out of the possession of itself, is universally found to exalt all the human powers. It renders the mind infinitely more enlightened, more penetrating, more vigorous and masterly, than it is in its calm moments. A man, actuated by a strong passion, becomes much greater than he is at other times. He is conscious of more strength and force; he utters greater sentiments, conceives higher designs, and executes them with a boldness and a felicity, of which, on other occasions, he could not think himself capable. But chiefly, with respect to persuasion, is the power of passion felt. Almost every man, in passion, is eloquent. Then, he is at no loss for words and arguments. He transmits to others, by a sort of contagious sympathy, the warm sentiments which he feels: his looks and gestures are all persuasive; and nature here shews herself infinitely more powerful than art. This is the foundation of that just and noted rule: 'Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi.'

This principle being once admitted, that all high eloquence flows from passion, several consequences follow, which deserve to be attended to; and the mention of which will serve to confirm the principle itself. For hence the universally acknowledged effect of enthusiasm, or warmth of any kind, in public speakers, for affecting their audience. Hence all laboured declamation, and affected or

naments of style, which shew the mind to be cool and unmoved, are so inconsistent with persuasive eloquence. Hence all studied prettinesses, in gesture or pronunciation, detract so greatly from the weight of a speaker. Hence a discourse that is read, moves us less than one that is spoken, as having less the appearance of coming warm from the heart. Hence, to call a man cold, is the same thing as to say that he is not eloquent. Hence a sceptical man, who is always in suspense, and feels nothing strongly; or a cunning mercenary man, who is suspected rather to assume the appearance of passion than to feel it; have so little power over men in public speaking. Hence, in fine, the necessity of being, and being believed to be, disinterested, and in earnest, in order to persuade.

These are some of the capital ideas which have occurred to me, concerning eloquence in general; and with which I have thought proper to begin, as the foundation of much of what I am afterward to suggest. From what I have already said, it is evident that eloquence is a high talent, and of great importance in society; and that it requires both natural genius and much improvement from art. Viewed as the art of persuasion, it requires, in its lowest state, soundness of understanding, and considerable acquaintance with human nature; and, in its higher degrees, it requires, moreover, strong sensibility of mind, a warm and lively imagination, joined with correctness of judgment, and an extensive command of the power of language; to which must also be added, the graces of pronunciation and delivery.—Let us next proceed to consider in what state eloquence has subsisted in different ages and nations.

It is an observation made by several writers, that eloquence is to be looked for only in free states. Longinus, in particular, at the end of his treatise on the Sublime, when assigning the reason why so little sublimity of genius appeared in the age wherein he lived, illustrates this observation with a great deal of beauty. Liberty, he remarks, is the nurse of true genius; it animates the spirit, and invigorates the hopes, of men; excites honourable emulation, and a desire of excelling in every art. All other qualifications, he says, you may find among those who are deprived of liberty; but never did a slave become an orator; he can only be a pompous flatterer. Now, though this reasoning be, in the main, true; it must, however, be understood with some limitations. For, under arbitrary governments, if they be of the civilized kind, and give encouragement to the arts, ornamented eloquence may flourish remarkably. Witness France at this day, where ever since the reign of Louis XIV. more of what may be justly called eloquence, within a certain sphere, is to be found, than, perhaps, in any other nation in Europe; though freedom be enjoyed by some nations in a much greater degree. The French sermons, and

orations pronounced on public occasions, are not only polite and elegant harangues, but several of them are uncommonly spirited, are animated with bold figures, and rise to a degree of the sublime. Their eloquence, however, in general, must be confessed to be of the flowery rather than the vigorous kind; calculated more to please and sooth, than to convince and persuade. High, manly, and forcible eloquence is, indeed, to be looked for only, or chiefly, in the regions of freedom. Under arbitrary governments, besides the general turn of softness and effeminacy which such governments may be justly supposed to give to the spirit of a nation, the art of speaking cannot be such an instrument of ambition, business, and power, as it is in democratical states. It is confined within a narrower range; it can be employed only in the pulpit, or at the bar; but is excluded from those great scenes of public business, where the spirits of men have the freest exertion; where important affairs are transacted, and persuasion, of course, is more seriously studied. Wherever man can acquire most power over man by means of reason and discourse, which certainly is under a free state of government, there we may naturally expect that true eloquence will be best understood, and carried to the greatest height.

Hence, in tracing the rise of oratory, we need not attempt to go far back into the early ages of the world, or search for it among the monuments of Eastern or Egyptian antiquity. In those ages, there was, indeed, an eloquence of a certain kind; but it approached nearer to poetry, than to what we properly call oratory. There is reason to believe, as I formerly shewed, that the language of the first ages was passionate and metaphorical; owing partly to the scanty stock of words of which speech then consisted; and partly to the tincture which language naturally takes from the savage and uncultivated state of men, agitated by unrestrained passions, and struck by events which to them are strange and surprising. In this state, rapture and enthusiasm, the parents of poetry, had an ample field But while the intercourse of men was as yet unfrequent, and force and strength were the chief means employed in deciding controversies, the arts of oratory and persuasion, of reasoning and debate, could be but little known. The first empires that arose, the Assyrian and Egyptian, were of the despotic kind. The whole power was in the hands of one, or at most of a few. The multitude were accustomed to a blind reverence; they were led, not persuaded; and none of those refinements of society which make public speaking an object of importance, were as yet introduced.

It is not till the rise of the Grecian republics that we find any remarkable appearances of eloquence as the art of persuasion; and these gave it such a field as it never had before, and, perhaps, has never had again since that time. And, therefore, as the Grecian eloquence has ever been the object of admiration to those who have

studied the powers of speech, it is necessary that we fix our attention for a little on this period.

Greece was divided into a multitude of petty states. These were governed, at first, by kings who were called tyrants; on whose expulsion from all these states, there sprung up a great number of democratical governments, founded nearly on the same plan, animated by the same high spirit of freedom, mutually jealous, and rivals of one another. We may compute the flourishing period of those Grecian states to have lasted from the battle of Marathon till the time of Alexander the Great, who subdued the liberties of Greece; a period which comprehends about 150 years, and within which are to be found most of their celebrated poets and philosophers, but chiefly their orators; for though poetry and philosophy were not extinct among them after that period, yet eloquence hardly made any figure.

Of these Grecian republics, the most noted by far for eloquence, and, indeed, for arts of every kind, was that of Athens. The Athenians were an ingenious, quick, sprightly people; practised in business, and sharpened by frequent and sudden revolutions, which happened in their government. The genius of their government was altogether democratical; their legislature consisted of the whole body of the people. They had, indeed, a senate of five hundred; but in the general convention of the citizens was placed the last resort; and affairs were conducted there, entirely, by reasoning, speaking, and a skilful application to the passions and interests of a popular assembly. There laws were made, peace and war decreed, and thence the magistrates were chosen. For the highest honours of the state were alike open to all; nor was the meanest tradesman excluded from a seat in their supreme courts. In such a state, eloquence, it is obvious, would be much studied, as the surest means of rising to influence and power; and what sort of eloquence? Not that which was brilliant merely, and showy, but that which was found, upon trial, to be most effectual for convincing, interesting, and persuading the hearers. For there, public speaking was not a mere competition for empty applause, but a serious contention for that public leading, which was the great object both of the men of ambition, and the men of virtue.

In so enlightened and acute a nation, where the highest attention was paid to every thing elegant in the arts, we may naturally expect to find the public taste refined and judicious. Accordingly, it was improved to such a degree, that the Attic taste and Attic manner have passed into a proverb. It is true, that ambitious demagogues and corrupt orators, did sometimes dazzle and mislead the people, by a showy but false eloquence; for the Athenians, with all their acuteness, were factious and giddy, and great admirers of every novelty. But when some important interest

drew their attention, when any great danger roused them, and put their judgment to a serious trial, they commonly distinguished, very justly, between genuine and spurious eloquence: and hence Demosthenes triumphed over all his opponents; because he spoke always to the purpose, affected no insignificant parade of words, used weighty arguments, and shewed them clearly where their interest lay. In critical conjunctures of the state, when the public was alarmed with some pressing danger, when the people were assembled, and proclamation was made by the crier, for any one to rise and deliver his opinion upon the present situation of affairs, empty declamation and sophistical reasoning would not only have been hissed, but resented and punished by an assembly so intelligent and accustomed to business. Their greatest orators trembled on such occasions, when they rose to address the people, as they knew they were to be held answerable for the issue of the counsel which they gave. The most liberal endowments of the greatest princes never could found such a school for true oratory as was formed by the nature of the Athenian republic. Eloquence there sprung, native and vigorous, from amidst the contentions of faction and freedom, of public business and of active life; and not from that retirement and speculation, which we are apt sometimes to fancy more favourable to eloquence than they are found to be.

Pisistratus, who was contemporary with Solon, and subverted his plan of government, is mentioned by Plutarch as the first who distinguished himself among the Athenians by application to the arts of speech. His ability in these arts he employed for raising himself to the sovereign power; which, however, when he had attained it, he exercised with moderation. Of the orators who flourished between his time and the Peloponnesian war, no particular mention is made in history. Pericles, who died about the beginning of that war, was properly the first who carried eloquence to a great height; to such a height, indeed, that it does not appear he was ever afterward surpassed. He was more than an orator; he was also a statesman and a general; expert in business, and of consummate address. Forty years he governed Athens with absolute sway; and historians ascribe his influence, not more to his political talents than to his eloquence, which was of that forcible and vehement kind, that bore every thing before it, and triumphed over the passions and affections of the people. Hence he had the surname of Olympias given him: and it was said, that, like Jupiter, he thundered when he spoke. Though his ambition be liable to censure, yet he was distinguished for several virtues; and it was the confidence which the people reposed in his integrity, that gave such a powerful effect to his eloquence. He appears to have been generous, magnanimous, and public-spirited; he raised no fortune to himself; he expended in-

deed great sums of the public money, but chiefly on public works; and at his death is said to have valued himself principally on having never obliged any citizen to wear mourning on his account, during his long administration. It is a remarkable particular recorded of Pericles by Suidas, that he was the first Athenian who composed, and put into writing, a discourse designed for the public.

Posterior to Pericles, in the course of the Peloponnesian war, arose Cleon, Alcibiades, Critias, and Theramenes, eminent citizens of Athens, who were all distinguished for their eloquence. They were not orators by profession; they were not formed by schools, but by a much more powerful education, that of business and debate; where man sharpened man, and civil affairs carried on by public speaking, brought every power of the mind into action. The manner of style of oratory which then prevailed, we learn from the orations in the history of Thucydides, who also flourished in the same age. It was manly, vehement, and concise, even to some degree of obscurity. 'Grandes erant verbis,' says Cicero, 'crebri sententiis, compressione rerum breves, et, ob eam ipsam causam, interdum subobscuri.'* A manner very different from what in modern times we would conceive to be the style of popular oratory; and which tends to give a high idea of the acuteness of those audiences to which they spoke.

The power of eloquence having, after the days of Pericles, become an object of greater consequence than ever, this gave birth to a set of men till then unknown, called Rhetoricians, and sometimes Sophists, who rose in multitudes during the Peloponnesian war; such as Protagoras, Prodicas, Thrasymus, and one who was more eminent than all the rest, Gorgias of Leontium. These Sophists joined to their art of rhetoric a subtile logic, and were generally a sort of metaphysical sceptics. Gorgias, however, was a professed master of eloquence only. His reputation was prodigious. He was highly venerated in Leontium of Sicily, his native city, and money was coined with his name upon it. In the latter part of his life, he established himself at Athens, and lived till he had attained the age of 105 years. Hermogenes (de Ideis, l. ii. cap. 9.) has preserved a fragment of his, from which we see his style and manner. It is extremely quaint and artificial; full of antithesis and pointed expression; and shews how far the Grecian subtilty had already carried the study of language. These Rhetoricians did not content themselves with delivering general instructions concerning eloquence to their pupils, and endeavouring to form their taste; but they professed the art of giving them receipts for making all sorts of orations; and of teaching them how to

* 'They were magnificent in their expressions; they abounded in thought; they compressed their matter into few words, and, by their brevity, were sometimes obscure.'

speak for, and against, every cause whatever. Upon this plan, they were the first who treated of common places, and the artificial invention of arguments and topics for every subject. In the hands of such men, we may easily believe that oratory would degenerate from the masculine strain it had hitherto held; and become a trifling and sophistical art; and we may justly deem them the first corrupters of true eloquence. To them the great Socrates opposed himself. By a profound but simple reasoning peculiar to himself, he exploded their sophistry; and endeavoured to recall men's attention from that abuse of reasoning and discourse which began to be in vogue, to natural language, and sound and useful thought.

In the same age, though somewhat later than the philosopher above-mentioned, flourished Isocrates, whose writings are still extant. He was a professed Rhetorician, and by teaching eloquence, he acquired both a great fortune, and higher fame than any of his rivals in that profession. No contemptible orator he was. His orations are full of morality and good sentiments; they are flowing and smooth; but too destitute of vigour. He never engaged in public affairs, nor pleaded causes; and accordingly his orations are calculated only for the shade: 'Pompæ,' Cicero allows, 'magis quam pugnæ aptior; ad voluptatem aurium accommodatus potius quam ad judiciorum certamen.'* The style of Gorgias of Leontium was formed into short sentences, composed generally of two members balanced against each other. The style of Isocrates, on the contrary, is swelling and full; and he is said to be the first who introduced the method of composing in regular periods, which had a studied music and harmonious cadence; a manner which he has carried to a vicious excess. What shall we think of an orator, who employed ten years in composing one discourse, still extant, entitled the Panegyric? How much frivolous care must have been bestowed on all the minute elegance of words and sentences? Dionysius of Halicarnassus has given us upon the orations of Isocrates, as also upon those of some other Greek orators, a full and regular treatise, which is, in my opinion, one of the most judicious pieces of ancient criticism extant, and very worthy of being consulted. He commends the splendour of Isocrates's style, and the morality of his sentiments; but severely censures his affectation, and the uniform regular cadence of all his sentences. He holds him to be a florid declaimer; not a natural persuasive speaker. Cicero, in his critical works, though he admits his failings, yet discovers a propensity to be very favourable to that 'plena ac numerosa oratio,' that swelling and musical style, which Isocrates introduced; and with the love of which, Cicero himself was, perhaps, somewhat infected. In one of his treatises (Orat. ad M. Brut.) he

* 'More fitted for show than for debate; better calculated for the amusement of an audience, than for judicial contests.'

informs us, that his friend Brutus and he differed in this particular, and that Brutus found fault with his partiality to Isocrates. The manner of Isocrates generally catches young people, when they begin to attend to composition; and it is very natural that it should do so. It gives them an idea of that regularity, cadence, and magnificence of style, which fills the ear; but when they come to write or speak for the world, they will find this ostentatious manner unfit, either for carrying on business, or commanding attention. It is said, that the high reputation of Isocrates prompted Aristotle, who was nearly his contemporary, or lived but a little after him, to write his Institutions of Rhetoric; which are indeed formed upon a plan of eloquence very different from that of Isocrates, and the Rhetoricians of that time. He seems to have had it in view to direct the attention of orators much more towards convincing and affecting their hearers, than towards the musical cadence of periods.

Isæus and Lysias, some of whose orations are preserved, belong also to this period. Lysias was somewhat earlier than Isocrates, and is the model of that manner which the ancients call the 'tenuis vel subtilis.' He has none of Isocrates's pomp. He is every where pure and Attic in the highest degree; simple and unaffected; but wants force, and is sometimes frigid in his compositions.* Isæus is chiefly remarkable for being the master of the

* In the judicious comparison, which Dionysius of Halicarnassus makes of the merits of Lysias and Isocrates, he ascribes to Lysias, as the distinguishing character of his manner, a certain grace or elegance arising from simplicity; '*πεφοκε γαρ ἡ Λυσιυ λεξις εχιιν το Χαριεν· ἡ δ' Ἰσοκρατυς, βυλεται.*' The style of Lysias has gracefulness for its nature; that of Isocrates seeks to have it.' In the art of narration, as distinct, probable, and persuasive, he holds Lysias to be superior to all orators: at the same time, he admits that his composition is more adapted to private litigation than to great subjects. He convinces, but he does not elevate nor animate. The magnificence and splendour of Isocrates is more suited to great occasions. He is more agreeable than Lysias; and, in dignity of sentiment, far excels him. With regard to the affectation which is visible in Isocrates's manner, he concludes what he says of it with the following excellent observations, which should never be forgotten by any who aspire to be true orators: '*Τῆς μεντοι αγωγῆς των περιοδων το κυκλιον, και των σχηματισμων της λεξεως το μειρακιῶδές, υκ ἐδοκιμαζον· δυλευει γαρ ἡ διανοια πολλακις τω ρυθμω της λεξεως, και τυ κομψυ λειπεται το ἀληθινον. κρατιςον τ' επιτηδευμα εν διαλεκτω πολιτικη, και εναγωνιω, το ομοιοτατον τω κατα φυσιν, βυλεται δε ἡ φυσις τοις νοημασιν επεσθαι της λεξιν, ὐ τη λεξει τα νοηματα· συμβυλω δε δη περι πολεμυ και ειρηνης λεγοντι και ιδιωτη τον περι ψυχης τρεχοντι κινδυνον εν δικαςαις, τα κομψα, και θεατρικα, και μειρακιωδη ταυτα ὐκ οιδα ἡτινα δυναιτ' αν παρασχειν ωφελειαν· μαλλον δ' οιδα ὁτι και βλαβης ἀν ἀιτια γενοιτο. χαριεντισμος γαρ πᾶς εν σπυδη, και καλως γινομενος, ἀωρον πραγμα και πολεμιώτατον ἐλεω.*' Judic. de Isocrate, p. 558. "His studied circumflexion of periods, and juvenile affectation of the flowers of speech, I do not approve. The thought is frequently made subservient to the music of the sentence; and elegance is preferred to reason. Whereas, in every discourse, where business and affairs are concerned, nature ought to be followed: and nature certainly dictates that the expression should be an object subordinate to the sense, not the sense to the expression. When one rises to give public council concerning war and peace, or takes the charge of a private man, who is standing at the bar to be tried for his life, those studied decorations, those theatrical graces, and juvenile

great Demosthenes, in whom, it must be acknowledged, eloquence shone forth with higher splendour, than perhaps in any that ever bore the name of an orator, and whose manner and character, therefore, must deserve our particular attention.

I shall not spend any time upon the circumstances of Demosthenes's life; they are well known. The strong ambition which he discovered to excel in the art of speaking; the unsuccessfulness of his first attempts; his unwearied perseverance in surmounting all the disadvantages that arose from his person and address; his shutting himself up in a cave, that he might study with less distraction; his declaiming by the sea shore, that he might accustom himself to the noise of a tumultuous assembly, and with pebbles in his mouth, that he might correct a defect in his speech; his practising at home with a naked sword hanging over his shoulder, that he might check an ungraceful motion, to which he was subject; all those circumstances, which we learn from Plutarch, are very encouraging to such as study eloquence, as they shew how far art and application may avail, for acquiring an excellence which nature seemed unwilling to grant us.

Despising the affected and florid manner which the Rhetoricians of that age followed, Demosthenes returned to the forcible and manly eloquence of Pericles; and strength and vehemence form the principal characteristics of his style. Never had orator a finer field than Demosthenes in his Olynthiacs and Philippics, which are his capital orations; and, no doubt, to the nobleness of the subject, and to that integrity and public spirit which eminently breathe in them, they are indebted for much of their merit. The subject is, to rouse the indignation of his countrymen against Philip of Macedon, the public enemy of the liberties of Greece; and to guard them against the insidious measures, by which that crafty prince endeavoured to lay them asleep to danger. In the prosecution of this end, we see him taking every proper method to animate a people, renowned for justice, humanity, and valour, but in many instances become corrupt and degenerate. He boldly taxes them with their venality, their indolence, and indifference to the public cause; while, at the same time, with all the art of an orator, he recalls the glory of their ancestors to their thoughts, shews them that they are still a flourishing and a powerful people, the natural protectors of the liberty of Greece, and who wanted only the inclination to exert themselves, in order to make Philip tremble. With his contemporary orators, who were in Philip's interest, and who persuaded the people to peace, he keeps no mea

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flowers, are out of place. Instead of being of service, they are detrimental to the cause we espouse. When the contest is of a serious kind, ornaments, which at another time would have beauty, then lose their effect, and prove hostile to the affections which we wish to raise in our hearers.'

sures, but plainly reproaches them as the betrayers of their country. He not only prompts to vigorous conduct, but he lays down the plan of that conduct; he enters into particulars; and points out, with great exactness, the measures of execution. This is the strain of these orations. They are strongly animated; and full of the impetuosity and fire of public spirit. They proceed in a continued train of inductions, consequences, and demonstrations, founded on sound reason. The figures which he uses, are never sought after; but always rise from the subject. He employs them sparingly indeed; for splendour and ornament are not the distinctions of this orator's composition. It is an energy of thought peculiar to himself, which forms his character, and sets him above all others. He appears to attend much more to things than to words. We forget the orator, and think of the business. He warms the mind, and impels to action. He has no parade and ostentation; no methods of insinuation; no laboured introductions; but is like a man full of his subject, who, after preparing his audience by a sentence or two for hearing plain truths, enters directly on business.

Demosthenes appears to great advantage, when contrasted with Æschines in the celebrated oration 'pro Corona.' Æschines was his rival in business, and personal enemy; and one of the most distinguished orators of that age. But when we read the two orations, Æschines is feeble in comparison of Demosthenes, and makes much less impression on the mind. His reasonings concerning the law that was in question, are indeed very subtile; but his invective against Demosthenes is general, and ill supported. Whereas Demosthenes is a torrent, that nothing can resist. He bears down his antagonist with violence; he draws his character in the strongest colours; and the particular merit of that oration is, that all the descriptions in it are highly picturesque. There runs through it a strain of magnanimity and high honour: the orator speaks with that strength and conscious dignity which great actions and public spirit alone inspire. Both orators use great liberties with one another; and, in general, that unrestrained licence which ancient manners permitted, and which was carried by public speakers even to the length of abusive names and downright scurrility, as appears both here and in Cicero's Philippics, hurts and offends a modern ear. What those ancient orators gained by such a manner in point of freedom and boldness is more than compensated by want of dignity; which seems to give an advantage, in this respect, to the greater decency of modern speaking.

The style of Demosthenes is strong and concise, though sometimes, it must not be dissembled, harsh and abrupt. His words are very expressive; his arrangement is firm and manly; and though far from being unmusical, yet it seems difficult to find in

him that studied, but concealed, number and rhythmus, which some of the ancient critics are fond of attributing to him. Negligent of these lesser graces, one would rather conceive him to have aimed at that sublime which lies in sentiment. His action and pronunciation are recorded to have been uncommonly vehement and ardent; which, from the manner of his composition, we are naturally led to believe. The character which one forms of him, from reading his works, is of the austere, rather than the gentle kind. He is, on every occasion, grave, serious, passionate; takes every thing on a high tone; never lets himself down, nor attempts any thing like pleasantry. If any fault can be found with his admirable eloquence, it is, that he sometimes borders on the hard and dry. He may be thought to want smoothness and grace; which Dionysius of Halicarnassus attributes to his imitating too closely the manner of Thucydides, who was his great model for style, and whose history he is said to have written eight times over with his own hand. But these defects are far more than compensated, by that admirable and masterly force of masculine eloquence, which, as it overpowered all who heard it, cannot, at this day, be read without emotion.

After the days of Demosthenes, Greece lost her liberty; eloquence of course languished, and relapsed again into the feeble manner introduced by the Rhetoricians and Sophists. Demetrius Phalereus, who lived in the next age to Demosthenes, attained indeed some character, but he is represented to us as a flowery, rather than a persuasive speaker, who aimed at grace rather than substance. 'Delectabat Athenienses,' says Cicero, 'magis quam inflammabat.'—'He amused the Athenians, rather than warmed them.' And after his time, we hear of no more Grecian orators of any note.

LECTURE XXVI.

HISTORY OF ELOQUENCE CONTINUED.—ROMAN ELOQUENCE.—CICERO.—MODERN ELOQUENCE.

Having treated of the rise of eloquence, and of its state among the Greeks, we now proceed to consider its progress among the Romans, where we shall find one model, at least, of eloquence, in its most splendid and illustrious form. The Romans were long a martial nation, altogether rude, and unskilled in arts of any kind. Arts were of late introduction among them; they were not known till after the conquest of Greece; and the Romans always acknowledged the Grecians as their masters in every part of learning:

Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
Intulit agresti Latio.*—— Hor. Epist. ad Aug.

As the Romans derived their eloquence, poetry, and learning, from the Greeks, so they must be confessed to be far inferior to them in genius for all these accomplishments. They were a more grave and magnificent, but a less acute and sprightly people. They had neither the vivacity nor the sensibility of the Greeks; their passions were not so easily moved, nor their conceptions so lively; in comparison of them, they were a phlegmatic nation. Their language resembled their character; it was regular, firm, and stately; but wanted that simple and expressive naïveté, and, in particular, that flexibility to suit every different mode and species of composition, for which the Greek tongue is distinguished above that of every other country:

Graiis ingenium, Graiis dedit ore rotundo
Musa loqui†—— Ars Poet.

And hence, when we compare together the various rival productions of Greece and Rome, we shall always find this distinction obtain, that in the Greek productions there is more native genius; in the Roman, more regularity and art. What the Greeks invented, the Romans polished; the one was the original, rough sometimes, and incorrect; the other, a finished copy.

As the Roman government, during the republic, was of the popular kind, there is no doubt but that, in the hands of the leading men, public speaking became early an engine of government, and was employed for gaining distinction and power. But, in the rude unpolished times of the state, their speaking was hardly of that sort that could be called eloquence. Though Cicero, in his treatise, 'de Claris Oratoribus,' endeavours to give some reputation to the elder Cato, and those who were his contemporaries, yet he acknowledges it to have been 'asperum et horridum genus dicendi,' a rude and harsh strain of speech. It was not till a short time preceding Cicero's age, that the Roman orators rose into any note. Crassus and Antonius, two of the speakers in the Dialogue de Oratore, appear to have been the most eminent, whose different manners Cicero describes with great beauty in that dialogue, and in his other rhetorical works. But as none of their productions are extant, nor any of Hortensius's, who was Cicero's contemporary and rival at

* When conquer'd Greece brought in her captive arts,
She triumph'd o'er her savage conquerors' hearts;
Taught our rough verse its numbers to refine,
And our rude style with elegance to shine. Francis.

† To her loved Greeks the Muse indulgent gave,
To her loved Greeks with greatness to conceive;
And in sublimer tone their language raise:
Her Greeks were only covetous of praise. Francis.

the bar, it is needless to transcribe from Cicero's writings the account which he gives of those great men, and of the character of their eloquence.*

The object in this period most worthy to draw our attention, is Cicero himself; whose name alone suggests every thing that is splendid in oratory. With the history of his life, and with his character as a man and a politician, we have not at present any direct concern. We consider him only as an eloquent speaker; and, in this view, it is our business to remark both his virtues, and his defects, if he has any. His virtues are, beyond controversy, eminently great. In all his orations there is high art. He begins, generally, with a regular exordium; and with much preparation and insinuation prepossesses the hearers, and studies to gain their affections. His method is clear, and his arguments are arranged with great propriety. His method is indeed more clear than that of Demosthenes; and this is one advantage which he has over him. We find every thing in its proper place; he never attempts to move, till he has endeavoured to convince; and in moving, especially the softer passions, he is very successful. No man knew the power and force of words better than Cicero. He rolls them along with the greatest beauty and pomp; and, in the structure of his sentences, is curious and exact to the highest degree. He is always full and flowing, never abrupt. He is a great amplifier of every subject; magnificent, and in his sentiments highly moral. His manner is on the whole diffuse, yet it is often happily varied, and suited to the subject. In his four orations, for instance, against Catiline, the tone and style of each of them, particularly the first and last, is very different, and accommodated with a great deal of judgment to the occasion, and the situation in which they were spoken. When a great public object roused his mind, and demanded indignation and force, he departs considerably from that loose and declamatory manner to which he leans at other times, and becomes exceedingly cogent and vehement. This is the case in his orations against Antony, and in those two against Verres and Catiline.

Together with those high qualities which Cicero possesses, he is not exempt from certain defects, of which it is necessary to take notice. For the Ciceronian eloquence is a pattern so dazzling by its beauties, that, if not examined with accuracy and judgment, it is apt to betray the unwary into a faulty imitation; and I am of opinion, that it has sometimes produced this effect. In most of his orations, especially those composed in the earlier part of his

* Such as are desirous of particular information on this head, had better have recourse to the original, by reading Cicero's three books De Oratore, and his other two treatises, entitled, the one, Brutus, sive de Claris Oratoribus; the other, Orator ad M. Brutum; which, on several accounts, well deserve perusal.

life, there is too much art; even carried the length of ostentation. There is too visible a parade of eloquence. He seems often to aim at obtaining admiration, rather than at operating conviction, by what he says. Hence, on some occasions, he is showy rather than solid; and diffuse, where he ought to have been pressing. His sentences are, at all times, round and sonorous; they cannot be accused of monotony, for they possess variety of cadence; but, from too great a study of magnificence, he is sometimes deficient in strength. On all occasions, where there is the least room for it, he is full of himself. His great actions, and the real services which he had performed to his country, apologize for this in part; ancient manners, too, imposed fewer restraints from the side of decorum; but, even after these allowances made, Cicero's ostentation of himself cannot be wholly palliated; and his orations, indeed all his works, leave on our minds the impression of a good man, but withal, of a vain man.

The defects which we have now taken notice of in Cicero's eloquence were not unobserved by his own contemporaries. This we learn from Quinctilian, and from the author of the dialogue 'de Causis Corruptæ Eloquentiæ.' Brutus, we are informed, called him, 'fractum et elumbem,' broken and enervated. 'Suorum temporum homines,' says Quinctilian, 'incessere audebant eum ut tumidiorem et Asianum, et redundantem, et in repetitionibus nimium, et in salibus aliquando frigidum, et in compositione fractum et exsultantem, et penè viro molliorem.'* These censures were undoubtedly carried too far; and savour of malignity and personal enmity. They saw his defects, but they aggravated them; and the source of these aggravations can be traced to the difference which prevailed in Rome, in Cicero's days, between two great parties with respect to eloquence; the 'Attici,' and the 'Asiani.' The former, who called themselves the Attics, were the patrons of what they conceived to be the chaste, simple, and natural style of eloquence; from which they accused Cicero as having departed, and as leaning to the florid Asiatic manner. In several of his rhetorical works, particularly in his 'Orator ad Brutum,' Cicero, in his turn, endeavours to expose this sect, as substituting a frigid and jejune manner, in place of the true Attic eloquence; and contends that his own composition was formed upon the real Attic style. In the tenth chapter of the last book of Quinctilian's Institutions, a full account is given of the disputes between these two parties, and of the Rhodian or middle manner between the Attics and the Asiatics. Quinctilian himself declares on Cicero's side;

* 'His contemporaries ventured to reproach him as swelling, redundant, and Asiatic; too frequent in repetitions; in his attempts towards wit, sometimes cold; and in the strain of his composition, feeble, desultory, and more effeminate than became a man.'

and whether it be called Attic or Asiatic, prefers the full, the copious, and the amplifying style. He concludes with this very just observation: 'Plures sunt eloquentiæ facies; sed stultissimum est quærere, ad quam recturus se sit orator; cum omnis species, quæ modo recta est, habeat usum.—Utetur enim, ut res exiget, omnibus; nec pro causâ modo, sed pro partibus causæ.'*

On the subject of comparing Cicero and Demosthenes, much has been said by critical writers. The different manners of these two princes of eloquence, and the distinguishing characters of each, are so strongly marked in their writings, that the comparison is, in many respects, obvious and easy. The character of Demosthenes is vigour and austerity; that of Cicero is gentleness and insinuation. In the one, you find more manliness; in the other, more ornament. The one is more harsh, but more spirited and cogent; the other, more agreeable, but, withal, looser and weaker.

To account for this difference, without any prejudice to Cicero, it has been said, that we must look to the nature of their different auditories; that the refined Athenians followed with ease the concise and convincing eloquence of Demosthenes; but that a manner more popular, more flowery, and declamatory, was requisite in speaking to the Romans, a people less acute, and less acquainted with the arts of speech. But this is not satisfactory. For we must observe, that the Greek orator spoke much oftener before a mixed multitude, than the Roman. Almost all the public business of Athens was transacted in popular assemblies. The common people were his hearers, and his judges. Whereas Cicero generally addressed himself to the 'Patres Conscripti,' or in criminal trials to the prætor, and the select judges; and it cannot be imagined, that the persons of highest rank and best education in Rome, required a more diffuse manner of pleading than the common citizens of Athens, in order to make them understand the cause, or relish the speaker. Perhaps we shall come nearer the truth, by observing, that to unite all the qualities, without the least exception, that form a perfect orator, and to excel equally in each of those qualities, is not to be expected from the limited powers of human genius. The highest degree of strength is, I suspect, never found united with the highest degree of smoothness and ornament; equal attentions to both are incompatible; and the genius that carries ornament to its utmost length, is not of such a kind, as can excel as much in vigour. For there plainly lies the characteristical difference between these two celebrated orators.

* 'Eloquence admits of many different forms; and nothing can be more foolish than to inquire by which of them an orator is to regulate his composition; since every form which is in itself just, has its own place and use. The orator, according as circumstances require, will employ them all; suiting them not only to the cause or subject of which he treats, but to the different parts of that subject.'

It is a disadvantage to Demosthenes, that, besides his conciseness, which sometimes produces obscurity, the language in which he writes is less familiar to most of us than the Latin, and that we are less acquainted with the Greek antiquities than we are with the Roman. We read Cicero with more ease, and of course with more pleasure. Independent of this circumstance too, he is, no doubt, in himself, a more agreeable writer than the other. But notwithstanding this advantage, I am of opinion, that were the state in danger, or some great national interest at stake, which drew the serious attention of the public, an oration in the spirit and strain of Demosthenes would have more weight, and produce greater effects, than one in the Ciceronian manner. Were Demosthenes's Philippics spoken in a British assembly, in a similar conjuncture of affairs, they would convince and persuade at this day. The rapid style, the vehement reasoning, the disdain, anger, boldness, freedom, which perpetually animate them, would render their success infallible over any modern assembly. I question whether the same can be said of Cicero's orations; whose eloquence, however beautiful, and however well suited to the Roman taste, yet borders oftener on declamation, and is more remote from the manner in which we now expect to hear real business and causes of importance treated.*

In comparing Demosthenes and Cicero, most of the French critics are disposed to give the preference to the latter. P. Rapin the Jesuit, in the parallels which he has drawn between some of the most eminent Greek and Roman writers, uniformly decides in favour of the Roman. For the preference which he gives to Cicero, he assigns, and lays stress on one reason of a pretty extraordinary nature; viz. that Demosthenes could not possibly have so complete an insight as Cicero into the manners and passions of men; why? because he had not the advantage of perusing Aristotle's Treatise of Rhetoric, wherein, says our critic, he has fully laid open that mystery: and to support this weighty argument, he enters into a controversy with A. Gellius, in order to prove that Aristotle's Rhetoric was not published till after Demosthenes had spoken, at least his most considerable orations. Nothing can be more childish. Such orators as Cicero and Demosthenes derived their knowledge of the human passions, and their power of moving them, from higher sources than any treatise of rhetoric. One French critic has indeed departed from the common track; and, after bestowing on Cicero those just praises to which the consent of so many ages shews him to be entitled, concludes, however, with giving the palm to Demosthenes. This is Fenelon,

* In this judgment I concur with Mr. David Hume, in his Essay upon Eloquence. He gives it as his opinion, that, of all human productions, the orations of Demosthenes present to us the models which approach the nearest to perfection.

the famous Archbishop of Cambray, and author of Telemachus; himself surely no enemy to all the graces and flowers of composition. It is in his Reflections on Rhetoric and Poetry, that he gives this judgment; a small tract, commonly published along with his Dialogues on Eloquence.* These dialogues and reflections are particularly worthy of perusal, as containing, I think, the justest ideas on the subject that are to be met with in any modern critical writer.

The reign of eloquence, among the Romans, was very short. After the age of Cicero, it languished, or rather expired; and we have no reason to wonder at this being the case. For not only was liberty entirely extinguished, but arbitrary power felt in its heaviest and most oppressive weight; Providence having, in its wrath, delivered over the Roman empire to a succession of some of the most execrable tyrants that ever disgraced and scourged the human race. Under their government, it was naturally to be expected that taste would be corrupted, and genius discouraged. Some of the ornamental arts, less intimately connected with liberty, continued, for a while, to prevail; but for that masculine eloquence, which had exercised itself in the senate, and in the public affairs, there was no longer any place. The change which was produced on eloquence, by the nature of the government, and the state of the public manners, is beautifully described in the Dialogue de Causis Corruptæ Eloquentiæ, which is attributed by some to Tacitus, by others to Quinctilian. Luxury, effeminacy, and flattery, overwhelmed all. The Forum, where so many great affairs had been transacted, was now become a desert. Private causes were still pleaded; but the public was no longer interested; nor any general attention drawn to what passed there: 'Unus inter hæc, et alter, dicenti, assistit; et res velut in solitudine agitur. Oratori autem clamore plausuque opus est, et velut quodam theatro, qualia quotidie antiquis oratoribus contingebant; cum tot ac tam nobiles forum coarctarent; cum clientelæ, et tribus, et mu-

* As his expressions are remarkably happy and beautiful, the passage here referred to deserves to be inserted.—'Je ne crains pas dire, que Démosthène me paroit supérieur à Cicéron. Je proteste que person n'admire plus Cicéron que je fais. Il embellit tout ce qu'il touche. Il fait honneur à la parole. Il fait des mots ce qu'un autre n'en sauroit faire. Il a je ne sai combien de sortes d'esprits. Il est même court, et véhément, toutes les fois qu'il veut l'estre; contre Catiline, contre Verres, contre Antoine. Mais on remarque quelque parure dan son discours. L'art y est merveilleux; mais on l'entrevoit. L'orateur en pensant au salut de la république, ne s'oublie pas, et ne se laisse pas oublier. Démosthène paroit sortir de soi, et ne voir que la patrie. Il ne cherche point le beau; il le fait, sans y penser. Il est au-dessus de l'admiration. Il se sert de la parole, comme un homme modeste de son habit, pour se couvrir. Il tonne; il foudroye. C'est un torrent qui entraine tout. On ne peut le critiquer, parcequ'on est saisi. On pense aux choses qu'il dit, et non à ses paroles. On le perd de vue. On n'est occupé que de Philippe qui envahit tout. Je suis charmé de ces deux orateurs: mais j'avoue que je suis moins touché de l'art infini, et de la magnifique éloquence de Cicéron, que de la rapide simplicité de Démosthène.'

nicipiorum legationes, periclitantibus assisterent; cum in plerisque judiciis crederet populus Romanus suâ interesse quid judicaretur.'*

In the schools of the declaimers, the corruption of eloquence was completed. Imaginary and fantastic subjects, such as had no reference to real life or business, were made the themes of declamation; and all manner of false and affected ornaments were brought into vogue: 'Pace vestrâ liceat dixisse,' says Petronius Arbiter, to the declaimers of his time, 'primi omnem eloquentiam perdidistis. Levibus enim ac inanibus sonis ludibria quædam excitando, effecistis ut corpus orationis enervaretur atque caderet. Et ideo ego existimo adolescentulos in scholis stultissimos fieri, quia nihil ex iis, quæ in usu habemus, aut audiunt, aut vident; sed piratas cum catenis in littore stantes; et tyrannos edicta scribentes quibus imperent filiis ut patrum suorum capita præcidant; sed responsa, in pestilentiâ data, ut virgines tres aut plures immolentur; sed mellitos verborum globulos, et omnia quasi papavere, et sesamo sparsa. Qui inter hæc nutriuntur, non magis sapere possunt, quam bene olere qui in culinâ habitant.'† In the hands of the Greek rhetoricians, the manly and sensible eloquence of their first noted speakers degenerated, as I formerly shewed, into subtilty and sophistry; in the hands of the Roman declaimers, it passed into the quaint and affected; into point and antithesis. This corrupt manner begins to appear in the writings of Seneca; and shews itself, also, in the famous panegyric of Pliny the Younger, on Trajan, which may be considered as the last effort of Roman oratory. Though the author was a man of genius, yet it is deficient in nature and ease. We see, throughout the whole, a perpetual attempt to depart from the ordinary way of thinking, and to support a forced elevation.

* 'The courts of judicature are, at present, so unfrequented, that the orator seems to stand alone, and talk to bare walls. But eloquence rejoices in the bursts of loud applause, and exults in a full audience; such as used to press round the ancient orators, when the Forum stood crowded with nobles; when a numerous retinue of clients, when foreign ambassadors, when tribes and whole cities, assisted at the debate; and when, in many trials, the Roman people understood themselves to be concerned in the event.'

† 'With your permission, I must be allowed to say, that you have been the first destroyers of all true eloquence. For by those mock subjects, on which you employ your empty and unmeaning compositions, you have enervated and overthrown all that is manly and substantial in oratory. I cannot but conclude, that the youth whom you educate, must be totally perverted in your schools, by hearing and seeing nothing which has any affinity to real life, or human affairs; but stories of pirates standing on the shore, provided with chains for loading their captives, and of tyrants issuing their edicts, by which children are commanded to cut off the heads of their parents; but responses given by oracles in the time of pestilence, that several virgins must be sacrificed; but glittering ornaments of phrase, and a style highly spiced, if we may say so, with affected conceits. They who are educated in the midst of such studies, can no more acquire a good taste, than they can smell sweet who dwell perpetually in a kitchen.'

In the decline of the Roman empire, the introduction of Christianity gave rise to a new species of eloquence, in the apologies, sermons, and pastoral writings, of the fathers of the church. Among the Latin fathers, Lactantius and Minutius Felix are the most remarkable for purity of style; and, in a later age, the famous St. Augustine possesses a considerable share of sprightliness and strength. But none of the fathers afford any just models of eloquence. Their language, as soon as we descend to the third or fourth century, becomes harsh; and they are, in general, infected with the taste of that age, a love of swoln and strained thoughts, and of the play of words. Among the Greek fathers, the most distinguished, by far, for his oratorial merit, is St. Chrysostom. His language is pure; his style highly figured. He is copious, smooth, and sometimes pathetic. But he retains, at the same time, much of that character which has been always attributed to the Asiatic eloquence, diffuse and redundant to a great degree, and often overwrought and tumid. He may be read, however, with advantage, for the eloquence of the pulpit, as being freer from false ornaments than the Latin fathers.

As there is nothing more that occurs to me deserving particular attention in the middle age, I pass now to the state of eloquence in modern times. Here, it must be confessed, that in no European nation, public speaking has been considered as so great an object, or been cultivated with so much care, as in Greece or Rome. Its reputation has never been so high; its effects have never been so considerable; nor has that high and sublime kind of it, which prevailed in those ancient states, been so much as aimed at: notwithstanding, too, that a new profession has been established, which gives peculiar advantages to oratory, and affords it the noblest field; I mean that of the church. The genius of the world seems, in this respect, to have undergone some alteration. The two countries where we might expect to find most of the spirit of eloquence, are France and Great Britain: France, on account of the distinguished turn of the nation towards all the liberal arts, and of the encouragement which, for this century past, these arts have received from the public; Great Britain, on account both of the public capacity and genius, and of the free government which it enjoys. Yet so it is, that, in neither of those countries, has the talent of public speaking risen near to the degree of its ancient splendour. While in other productions of genius, both in prose and in poetry, they have contended for the prize with Greece and Rome; nay, in some compositions, may be thought to have surpassed them: the names of Demosthenes and Cicero stand, at this day, unrivalled in fame; and it would be held presumptuous and absurd, to pretend to place any modern whatever in the same, or even in a nearly equal rank.

It seems particularly surprising, that Great Britain should not

have made a more conspicuous figure in eloquence than it has hitherto attained; when we consider the enlightened, and, at the same time, the free and bold genius of the country, which seems not a little to favour oratory; and when we consider that of all the polite nations, it alone possesses a popular government, or admits into the legislature such numerous assemblies as can be supposed to lie under the dominion of eloquence.* Notwithstanding this advantage, it must be confessed, that, in most parts of eloquence, we are undoubtedly inferior, not only to the Greeks and Romans, by many degrees, but also in some respects to the French. We have philosophers, eminent and conspicuous, perhaps, beyond any nation, in every branch of science. We have both taste and erudition in a high degree. We have historians, we have poets of the greatest name; but of orators or public speakers, how little have we to boast? And where are the monuments of their genius to be found? In every period we have had some who made a figure, by managing the debates in parliament; but that figure was commonly owing to their wisdom, or their experience in business, more than to their talents for oratory; and unless in some few instances, wherein the power of oratory has appeared, indeed, with much lustre, the art of parliamentary speaking rather obtained to several a temporary applause, than conferred upon any a lasting renown. At the bar, though, questionless, we have many able pleaders, yet few or none of their pleadings have been thought worthy to be transmitted to posterity; or have commanded attention, any longer than the cause which was the subject of them, interested the public; while, in France, the pleadings of Patru, in the former age, and those of Cochin and D'Aguesseau, in latter times, are read with pleasure, and are often quoted as examples of eloquence by the French critics. In the same manner, in the pulpit, the British divines have distinguished themselves by the most accurate and rational compositions, which, perhaps, any nation can boast of. Many printed sermons we have, full of good sense, and of sound divinity and morality; but the eloquence to be found in them, the power of persuasion, of interesting and engaging the heart, which is, or ought to be, the great object of the pulpit, is far from bearing a suitable proportion to the excellence of the matter. There are few arts, in my opinion, farther from perfection, than that of preaching is among us; the reasons of which, I shall afterward have occasion to discuss; in proof of the fact, it is sufficient to observe, that an English

* Mr. Hume, in his Essay on Eloquence, makes this observation, and illustrates it with his usual elegance. He, indeed, supposes, that no satisfactory reasons can be given to account for the inferiority of modern to ancient eloquence. In this, I differ from him, and shall endeavour, before the conclusion of this Lecture, to point out some causes, to which, I think, it may, in a great measure, be ascribed in the three great scenes of public speaking.

sermon, instead of being a persuasive animated oration, seldom rises beyond the strain of correct and dry reasoning. Whereas, in the sermons of Bossuet, Massillon, Bourdaloue, and Flechier, among the French, we see a much higher species of eloquence aimed at, and in a great measure attained, than the British preachers have in view.

In general, the characteristical difference between the state of eloquence in France and in Great Britain is, that the French have adopted higher ideas both of pleasing and persuading by means of oratory, though sometimes, in the execution, they fail. In Great Britain we have taken up eloquence on a lower key; but in our execution, as was naturally to be expected, have been more correct. In France, the style of their orators is ornamented with bolder figures; and their discourse carried on with more amplification, more warmth and elevation. The composition is often very beautiful; but sometimes, also, too diffuse, and deficient in that strength and cogency which renders eloquence powerful; a defect owing, perhaps, in part, to the genius of the people, which leads them to attend fully as much to ornament as to substance; and, in part, to the nature of their government, which by excluding public speaking from having much influence on the conduct of public affairs, deprives eloquence of its best opportunity for acquiring nerves and strength. Hence the pulpit is the principal field, which is left for their eloquence. The members, too, of the French Academy, give harangues at their admission, in which genius often appears; but labouring under the misfortune of having no subject to discourse upon, they run commonly into flattery and panegyric, the most barren and insipid of all topics.

I observed before, that the Greeks and Romans aspired to a more sublime species of eloquence, than is aimed at by the moderns. Theirs was of the vehement and passionate kind, by which they endeavoured to inflame the minds of their hearers, and hurry their imaginations away: and suitable to this vehemence of thought, was their vehemence of gesture and action; the 'supplosio pedis,'* the 'percussio frontis et femoris,'† were, as we learn from Cicero's writings, usual gestures among them at the bar; though now they would be reckoned extravagant any where, except upon the stage. Modern eloquence is much more cool and temperate; and in Great Britain especially, has confined itself almost wholly to the argumentative and rational. It is much of that species which the ancient critics called the 'tenuis,' or 'subtilis;' which aims at convincing and instructing, rather than affecting the passions, and assumes a tone not much higher than common argument and discourse.

Several reasons may be given, why modern eloquence has been

* Vid. de Clar. Orator. † Ibid.

so limited and humble in its efforts. In the first place, I am of opinion, that this change must, in part, be ascribed to that correct turn of thinking, which has been so much studied in modern times. It can hardly be doubted, that, in many efforts of mere genius, the ancient Greeks and Romans excelled us; but, on the other hand, that, in accuracy and closeness of reasoning on many subjects, we have some advantage over them, ought, I think, to be admitted also. In proportion as the world has advanced, philosophy has made greater progress. A certain strictness of good sense has, in this island particularly, been cultivated, and introduced into every subject. Hence we are more on our guard against the flowers of elocution; we are on the watch; we are jealous of being deceived by oratory. Our public speakers are obliged to be more reserved than the ancients, in their attempts to elevate the imagination, and warm the passions; and, by the influence of prevailing taste, their own genius is sobered and chastened, perhaps in too great a degree. It is likely too, I confess, that what we fondly ascribe to our correctness and good sense, is owing, in a great measure, to our phlegm and natural coldness. For the vivacity and sensibility of the Greeks and Romans, more especially of the former, seem to have been much greater than ours, and to have given them a higher relish of all the beauties of oratory.

Besides these national considerations, we must, in the next place, attend to peculiar circumstances in the three great scenes of public speaking, which have proved disadvantageous to the growth of eloquence among us. Though the Parliament of Great Britain be the noblest field which Europe, at this day, affords to a public speaker, yet eloquence has never been so powerful an instrument there, as it was in the popular assemblies of Greece and Rome. Under some former reigns, the high hand of arbitrary power bore a violent sway; and in latter times ministerial influence has generally prevailed. The power of speaking, though always considerable, yet has been often found too feeble to counterbalance either of these; and, of course, has not been studied with so much zeal and fervour, as where its effect on business was irresistible and certain.

At the bar, our disadvantage, in comparison of the ancients, is great. Among them, the judges were generally numerous; the laws were few and simple; the decision of causes was left, in a great measure, to equity and the sense of mankind. Here was an ample field for what they termed Judicial Eloquence. But among the moderns, the case is quite altered. The system of law is become much more complicated. The knowledge of it is thereby rendered so laborious an attainment, as to be the chief object of a lawyer's education, and in a manner the study of his life. The art of speaking is but a secondary accomplishment, to which he can afford to devote much less of his time and labour. The bounds of

eloquence, besides, are now much circumscribed at the bar; and, except in a few cases, reduced to arguing from strict law, statute or precedent; by which means knowledge, much more than oratory, is become the principal requisite.

With regard to the pulpit, it has certainly been a great disadvantage, that the practice of reading sermons, instead of repeating them from memory, has prevailed in England. This may, indeed, have introduced accuracy; but it has done great prejudice to eloquence: for a discourse read, is far inferior to an oration spoken. It leads to a different sort of composition, as well as of delivery; and can never have an equal effect upon any audience. Another circumstance, too, has been unfortunate. The sectaries and fanatics, before the Restoration, adopted a warm, zealous, and popular manner of preaching; and those who adhered to them in after-times, continued to distinguish themselves by somewhat of the same manner. The odium of these sects drove the established church from that warmth which they were judged to have carried too far, into the opposite extreme of a studied coolness and composure of manner. Hence, from the art of persuasion, which preaching ought always to be, it has passed in England into mere reasoning and instruction; which not only has brought down the eloquence of the pulpit to a lower tone than it might justly assume, but has produced this farther effect, that, by accustoming the public ear to such cool and dispassionate discourses, it has tended to fashion other kinds of public speaking upon the same model.

Thus I have given some view of the state of eloquence in modern times, and endeavoured to account for it It has, as we have seen, fallen below that splendour which it maintained in ancient ages; and, from being sublime and vehement, has come down to be temperate and cool. Yet, still, in that region which it occupies, it admits great scope; and, to the defect of zeal and application, more than to the want of capacity and genius, we may ascribe its not having hitherto attained higher distinction. It is a field where there is much honour yet to be reaped. It is an instrument which may be employed for purposes of the highest importance. The ancient models may still, with much advantage, be set before us for imitation; though, in that imitation, we must, doubtless, have some regard to what modern taste and modern manners will bear; of which I shall afterward have occasion to say more.

LECTURE XXVII.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING---ELOQUENCE OF POPULAR ASSEMBLIES---EXTRACTS FROM DEMOSTHENES.

After the preliminary views which have been given of the nature of eloquence in general, and of the state in which it has subsisted in different ages and countries, I am now to enter on the consideration of the different kinds of public speaking, the distinguishing characters of each, and the rules which relate to them. The ancients divided all orations into three kinds: the Demonstrative, the Deliberative, and the Judicial. The scope of the demonstrative was to praise or to blame; that of the deliberative, to advise or to dissuade; that of the judicial, to accuse or to defend. The chief subjects of demonstrative eloquence, were panegyrics, invectives, gratulatory and funeral orations. The deliberative was employed in matters of public concern agitated in the senate, or before the assemblies of the people. The judicial is the same with the eloquence of the bar, employed in addressing judges, who have power to absolve or to condemn. This division runs through all the ancient treatises on rhetoric; and is followed by the moderns who copy them. It is a division not inartificial; and comprehends most, or all, of the matters which can be the subject of public discourse. It will, however, suit our purpose better, and be found, I imagine, more useful, to follow that division, which the train of modern speaking naturally points out to us, taking for the three great scenes of eloquence, popular assemblies, the bar, and the pulpit; each of which has a distinct character, that particularly suits it. This division coincides in part with the ancient one. The eloquence of the bar is precisely the same with what the ancients called the judicial. The eloquence of popular assemblies, though mostly of what they term the deliberative species, yet admits also of the demonstrative. The eloquence of the pulpit is altogether of a distinct nature, and cannot be properly reduced under any of the heads of the ancient rhetoricians.

To all the three, pulpit, bar, and popular assemblies, belong, in common, the rules, concerning the conduct of a discourse in all its parts. Of these rules I purpose afterward to treat at large. But before proceeding to them, I intend to shew, first, what is peculiar to each of these three kinds of oratory, in their spirit, character, or manner. For every species of public speaking has a manner or character peculiarly suited to it; of which it is highly material to have a just idea, in order to direct the application of general rules. The eloquence of a lawyer is fundamentally different from that of a divine, or a speaker in parliament: and to have a precise and proper idea of the distinguishing character

which any kind of public speaking requires, is the foundation of what is called a just taste in that kind of speaking.

Laying aside any question concerning the pre-eminence in point of rank, which is due to any one of the three kinds before mentioned, I shall begin with that which tends to throw most light upon the rest, viz. the Eloquence of Popular Assemblies. The most august theatre for this kind of eloquence, to be found in any nation of Europe, is, beyond doubt, the parliament of Great Britain. In meetings, too, of less dignity, it may display itself. Wherever there is a popular court, or wherever any number of men are assembled for debate or consultation, there, in different forms, this species of eloquence may take place.

Its object is, or ought always to be, persuasion. There must be some end proposed; some point, most commonly of public utility or good, in favour of which we seek to determine the hearers. Now, in all attempts to persuade men, we must proceed upon this principle, that it is necessary to convince their understanding. Nothing can be more erroneous, than to imagine, that, because speeches to popular assemblies admit more of a declamatory style than some other discourses, they therefore stand less in need of being supported by sound reasoning. When modelled upon this false idea, they may have the show, but never can produce the effect, of real eloquence. Even the show of eloquence which they make will please only the trifling and superficial. For, with all tolerable judges, indeed almost with all men, mere declamation soon becomes insipid. Of whatever rank the hearers be, a speaker is never to presume, that by a frothy and ostentatious harangue, without solid sense and argument, he can either make impression on them, or acquire fame to himself. It is, at least, a dangerous experiment; for, where such an artifice succeeds once, it will fail ten times. Even the common people are better judges of argument and good sense than we sometimes think them; and upon any question of business, a plain man, who speaks to the point, without art, will generally prevail over the most artful speaker who deals in flowers and ornament, rather than in reasoning. Much more, when public speakers address themselves to any assembly where there are persons of education and improved understanding, they ought to be careful not to trifle with their hearers.

Let it be ever kept in view, that the foundation of all that can be called eloquence, is good sense, and solid thought. As popular as the orations of Demosthenes were, spoken to all the citizens of Athens, every one who looks into them, must see how fraught they are with argument; and how important it appeared to him to convince the understanding, in order to persuade, or to work on the principles of action. Hence their influence in his own time; hence their fame at this day. Such a pattern as this, public

speakers ought to set before them for imitation, rather than follow the track of those loose and frothy declaimers, who have brought discredit on eloquence. Let it be their first study, in addressing any popular assembly, to be previously masters of the business on which they are to speak; to be well provided with matter and argument, and to rest upon these the chief stress. This will always give to their discourse an air of manliness and strength, which is a powerful instrument of persuasion. Ornament, if they have genius for it, will follow of course; at any rate it demands only their secondary study: 'Cura sit verborum; solicitudo rerum:'—'To your expression be attentive, but about your matter be solicitous,' is an advice of Quinctilian, which cannot be too often recollected by all who study oratory.

In the next place, in order to be persuasive speakers in a popular assembly, it is, in my opinion, a capital rule, that we be ourselves persuaded of whatever we recommend to others. Never, when it can be avoided, ought we to espouse any side of the argument, but what we believe to be the true and the right one. Seldom or never will a man be eloquent, but when he is in earnest, and uttering his own sentiments. They are only the 'veræ voces ab imo pectore,' the unassumed language of the heart or head, that carry the force of conviction. In a former Lecture, when entering on this subject, I observed, that all high eloquence must be the offspring of passion, or warm emotion. It is this which makes every man persuasive; and gives a force to his genius, which it possesses at no other time. Under what disadvantage then is he placed, who, not feeling what he utters, must counterfeit a warmth to which he is a stranger?

I know, that young people, on purpose to train themselves to the art of speaking, imagine it useful to adopt that side of the question under debate, which, to themselves, appears the weakest, and to try what figure they can make upon it. But, I am afraid, this is not the most improving education for public speaking; and that it tends to form them to a habit of flimsy and trivial discourse. Such a liberty they should, at no time, allow themselves, unless in meetings where no real business is carried on, but where declamation and improvement in speech is the sole aim. Nor even in such meetings, would I recommend it as the most useful exercise. They will improve themselves to more advantage, and acquit themselves with more honour, by choosing always that side of the debate to which, in their own judgment, they are most inclined, and supporting it by what seems to themselves most solid and persuasive. They will acquire the habit of reasoning closely, and expressing themselves with warmth and force, much more when they are adhering to their own sentiments, than when they are speaking in contradiction to them. In assemblies where any

mated and inspired by some great and public object, form the peculiar characteristics of popular eloquence, in its highest degree of perfection.

The liberty, however, which we are now giving of the strong and passionate manner to this kind of oratory, must be always understood with certain limitations and restraints, which it will be necessary to point out distinctly, in order to guard against dangerous mistakes on this subject.

As first, the warmth which we express must be suited to the occasion and the subject: for nothing can be more preposterous, than an attempt to introduce great vehemence into a subject, which is either of slight importance, or which, by its nature, requires to be treated of calmly. A temperate tone of speech, is that for which there is most frequent occasion; and he who is, on every subject, passionate and vehement, will be considered as a blusterer, and meet with little regard.

In the second place, we must take care never to counterfeit warmth without feeling it. This always betrays persons into an unnatural manner, which exposes them to ridicule. For, as I have often suggested, to support the appearance without the real feeling of passion, is one of the most difficult things in nature. The disguise can almost never be so perfect, as not to be discovered. The heart can only answer to the heart. The great rule here, as indeed in every other case, is, to follow nature: never to attempt a strain of eloquence which is not seconded by our own genius. One may be a speaker, both of much reputation and much influence, in the calm argumentative manner. To attain the pathetic, and the sublime of oratory, requires those strong sensibilities of mind, and that high power of expression. which are given to a few.

In the third place, even when the subject justifies the vehement manner, and when genius prompts it; when warmth is felt, not counterfeited; we must, still, set a guard on ourselves, not to allow impetuosity to transport us too far. Without emotion in the speaker, eloquence, as was before observed, will never produce its highest effects; but, at the same time, if the speaker lose command of himself, he will soon lose command of his audience too. He must never kindle too soon: he must begin with moderation; and study to carry his hearers along with him, as he warms in the progress of his discourse. For, if he runs before in the course of passion, and leaves them behind; if they are not tuned, if we may speak so, in unison to him, the discord will presently be felt, and be very grating. Let a speaker have ever so good reason to be animated and fired by his subject, it is always expected of him, that the awe and regard due to his audience should lay a decent restraint upon his warmth, and prevent it from carrying him

beyond certain bounds. If, when most heated by the subject, he can be so far master of himself as to preserve close attention to argument, and even to some degree of correct expression, this self-command, this exertion of reason, in the midst of passion, has a wonderful effect both to please and to persuade. It is indeed the master-piece, the highest attainment of eloquence; uniting the strength of reason with the vehemence of passion; affording all the advantages of passion for the purpose of persuasion, without the confusion and disorder which are apt to accompany it.

In the fourth place, in the highest and most animated strain of popular speaking, we must always preserve regard to what the public ear will bear. This direction I give, in order to guard against an injudicious imitation of ancient orators, who, both in their pronunciation and gesture, and in their figures of expression, used a bolder manner than what the greater coolness of modern taste will readily suffer. This may, perhaps, as I formerly observed, be a disadvantage to modern eloquence. It is no reason why we should be too severe in checking the impulse of genius, and continue always creeping on the ground; but it is a reason, however, why we should avoid carrying the tone of declamation to a height that would now be reckoned extravagant. Demosthenes, to justify the unsuccessful action of Cheronæa, calls up the names of those heroes who fell in the battle of Marathon and Platæa, and swears by them, that their fellow-citizens had done well in their endeavours to support the same cause. Cicero, in his oration for Milo, implores and obtests the Alban hills and groves, and makes a long address to them: and both passages, in these orators, have a fine effect.* But how few modern orators could venture on such apostrophes? and what a power of genius would it require to give such figures now their proper grace, or make them produce a due effect upon the hearers?

In the fifth and last place, in all kinds of public speaking, but especially in popular assemblies, it is a capital rule to attend to all the decorums of time, place, and character. No warmth of eloquence can atone for the neglect of these. That vehemence, which is becoming in a person of character and authority, may be

* The passage in Cicero is very beautiful, and adorned with the highest colouring of his eloquence. 'Non est humano consilio, ne mediocri quidem, Judices, deorum immortalium cura, res illa perfecta. Religiones, mehercule, ipsæ aræque cum illam belluam cadere viderunt, commovisse se videntur, et jus in illo suum retinuisse. Vos enim jam Albani tumuli, atque luci vos inquam imploro atque obtestor, vosque Albanorum obrutæ aræ, sacrorum populi Romani sociæ et equales, quas ille præceps amentiâ, cæsis prostratisque, sanctissimis lucis, substructionum insanis molibus oppresserat; vestræ tum aræ, vestræ religiones viguerunt, vestra vis valuit, quam ille omni scelere polluerat. Tuque ex tuo edito monte Latiali, sancte Jupiter, cujus ille lacus, nemora, finesque, sæpe omni nefario stupro, scelere macularat, aliquando ad eum puniendum, oculos aperuisti; vobis illæ, vobis vestro in conspectu, seræ, sed justæ tamen, et debitæ pœnæ solutæ sunt.'

unsuitable to the modesty expected from a young speaker. That sportive and witty manner which may suit one subject and one assembly, is altogether out of place in a grave cause and a solemn meeting. 'Caput artis est,' says Quinctilian, 'decere.'—'The first principle of art, is, to observe decorum.' No one should ever rise to speak in public, without forming to himself a just and strict idea of what suits his own age and character; what suits the subject, the hearers, the place, the occasion; and adjusting the whole train and manner of his speaking on this idea. All the ancients insist much on this. Consult the first chapter of the eleventh book of Quinctilian, which is employed wholly on this point, and is full of good sense. Cicero's admonitions in his Orator ad Brutum, I shall give in his own words, which should never be forgotten by any who speak in public. 'Est eloquentiæ, sicut reliquarum rerum, fundamentum, sapientia; ut enim in vitâ, sic in oratione nihil est difficilius quam quod deceat videre; hujus ignoratione sæpissimè peccatur; non enim omnis fortuna, non omnis auctoritas, non omnis ætas, nec vero locus, aut tempus, aut auditor omnis, eodem aut verborum genere tractandus est, aut sententiarum. Semperque in omni parte orationis, ut vitæ, quid deceat considerandum; quod et in re de quâ agitur positum est, et in personis et eorum qui dicunt, et eorum qui audiunt.'*—So much for the considerations that require to be attended to, with respect to the vehemence and warmth which is allowed in popular eloquence.

The current of style should in general be full, free, and natural. Quaint and artificial expressions are out of place here; and always derogate from persuasion. It is a strong and manly style which should chiefly be studied; and metaphorical language, when properly introduced, produces often a happy effect. When the metaphors are warm, glowing, and descriptive, some inaccuracy in them will be overlooked, which, in a written composition, would be remarked and censured. Amidst the torrent of declamation, the strength of the figure makes impression; the inaccuracy of it escapes.

With regard to the degree of conciseness or diffuseness, suited to popular eloquence, it is not easy to fix any exact bounds. I know that it is common to recommend a diffuse manner as the

* 'Good sense is the foundation of eloquence, as it is of all other things that are valuable. It happens in oratory exactly as it does in life, that frequently nothing is more difficult than to discern what is proper and becoming. In consequence of mistaking this, the grossest faults are often committed. For to the different degrees of rank, fortune, and age among men, to all the varieties of time, place, and auditory, the same style of language, and the same strain of thought cannot agree. In every part of a discourse, just as in every part of life, we must attend to what is suitable and decent; whether that be determined by the nature of the subject of which we treat, or by the characters of those who speak, or of those who hear.'

most proper. I am inclined, however, to think, that there is danger of erring in this respect; and that by indulging too much in the diffuse style, public speakers often lose more in point of strength, than they gain by the fulness of their illustration. There is no doubt, that in speaking to a multitude, we must not speak in sentences and apophthegms: care must be taken to explain and to inculcate; but this care may be, and frequently is, carried too far. We ought always to remember, that how much soever we may be pleased with hearing ourselves speak, every audience is very ready to be tired; and the moment they begin to be tired, all our eloquence goes for nothing. A loose and verbose manner never fails to create disgust; and, on most occasions, we had better run the risk of saying too little than too much. Better place our thought in one strong point of view, and rest it there, than by turning it into every light, and pouring forth a profusion of words upon it, exhaust the attention of our hearers, and leave them flat and languid.

Of pronunciation and delivery, I am hereafter to treat apart. At present it is sufficient to observe that in speaking to mixed assemblies, the best manner of delivery is the firm and the determined. An arrogant and overbearing manner is indeed always disagreeable; and the least appearance of it ought to be shunned: but there is a certain decisive tone, which may be assumed even by a modest man, who is thoroughly persuaded of the sentiments he utters; and which is best calculated for making a general impression. A feeble and hesitating manner bespeaks always some distrust of a man's own opinion, which is, by no means, a favourable circumstance for his inducing others to embrace it.

These are the chief thoughts which have occurred to me from reflection and observation, concerning the peculiar distinguishing characters of the eloquence proper for popular assemblies. The sum of what has been said, is this: The end of popular speaking is persuasion; and this must be founded on conviction. Argument and reasoning must be the basis, if we would be speakers of business, and not mere declaimers. We should be engaged in earnest on the side which we espouse; and utter, as much as possible, our own, and not counterfeited sentiments. The premeditation should be of things, rather than of words. Clear order and method should be studied; the manner and expression warm and animated; though still, in the midst of that vehemence, which may at times be suitable, carried on under the proper restraints which regard to the audience, and to the decorum of character, ought to lay on every public speaker: the style free and easy; strong and descriptive, rather than diffuse; and the delivery determined and firm. To conclude this head, let every orator remember, that the impression made by fine and artful speaking is

momentary; that made by argument and good sense, is solid and lasting.

I shall now, that I may afford an exemplification of that species of oratory of which I have been treating, insert some extracts from Demosthenes. Even under the great disadvantage of an English translation, they will exhibit a small specimen of that vigorous and spirited eloquence which I have so often praised. I shall take my extracts mostly from the Philippics and Olynthiacs, which were entirely popular orations spoken to the general convention of the citizens of Athens: and, as the subject of both the Philippics and the Olynthiacs is the same, I shall not confine myself to one oration, but shall join together passages taken from two or three of them; such as may shew his general strain of speaking, on some of the chief branches of the subject. The subject in general is, to rouse the Athenians to guard against Philip of Macedon, whose growing power and crafty policy had by that time endangered, and soon after overwhelmed, the liberties of Greece. The Athenians began to be alarmed; but their deliberations were slow, and their measures feeble; several of their favourite orators having been gained by Philip's bribes to favour his cause. In this critical conjuncture of affairs Demosthenes arose. In the following manner he begins his first Philippic; which, like the exordiums of all his orations, is simple and artless.*

'Had we been convened, Athenians! on some new subject of debate, I had waited till most of your usual counsellors had declared their opinions. If I had approved of what was proposed by them, I should have continued silent; if not, I should then have attempted to speak my sentiments. But since those very points on which these speakers have oftentimes been heard already, are at this time to be considered; though I have arisen first, I presume I may expect your pardon; for if they on former occasions had advised the proper measures, you would not have found it needful to consult at present.

'First then, Athenians! however wretched the situation of our affairs at present seems, it must not by any means be thought desperate. What I am now going to advance may possibly appear a paradox; yet it is a certain truth, that our past misfortunes afford a circumstance most favourable to our future hopes.† And what is that? even that our present difficulties are owing entirely to our total indolence and utter disregard of our own interest. For were we thus situated, in spite of every effort which our duty demanded, then indeed we might regard our fortunes as absolutely

* In the following extracts, Leland's translation is mostly followed.

† This thought is only hinted in the first Philippic, but brought out more fully in the third; as the same thoughts, occasioned by similar situations of affairs, sometimes occur in the different orations on this subject.

desperate. But now, Philip hath only conquered your supineness and inactivity; the state he hath not conquered. You cannot be said to be defeated; your force has never been exerted.

'If there is a man in this assembly who thinks that we must find a formidable enemy in Philip, while he views on one hand the numerous armies which surround him, and on the other, the weakness of our state, despoiled of so much of its dominions, I cannot deny that he thinks justly. Yet let him reflect on this; there was a time, Athenians! when we possessed Pydna, Potidœa, and Melthone, and all that country round; when many of the states, now subjected to him, were free and independent, and more inclined to our alliance than to his. If Philip, at that time weak in himself, and without allies, had desponded of success against you, he would never have engaged in those enterprises which are now crowned with success, nor could have raised himself to that pitch of grandeur at which you now behold him. But he knew well that the strongest places are only prizes laid between the combatants, and ready for the conqueror. He knew that the dominions of the absent devolve naturally to those who are in the field; the possessions of the supine, to the active and intrepid. Animated by these sentiments, he overturns whole nations. He either rules universally as a conqueror, or governs as a protector. For mankind naturally seek confederacy with such as they see resolved and preparing not to be wanting to themselves.

'If you, my countrymen! will now at length be persuaded to entertain the like sentiments; if each of you will be disposed to approve himself a useful citizen, to the utmost that his station and abilities enable him; if the rich will be ready to contribute, and the young to take the field; in one word, if you will be yourselves, and banish these vain hopes which every single person entertains, that the active part of public business may lie upon others, and he remain at his ease; you may then, by the assistance of the gods, recall those opportunities which your supineness hath neglected, regain your dominions, and chastise the insolence of this man.

'But when, O my countrymen! will you begin to exert your vigour? Do you wait till roused by some dire event? till forced by some necessity? What then are we to think of our present condition? To free men, the disgrace attending on misconduct is, in my opinion, the most urgent necessity. Or say, is it your sole ambition to wander through the public places, each inquiring of the other, "What new advices?" Can any thing be more new than that a man of Macedon should conquer the Athenians, and give law to Greece? "Is Philip dead?" "No—but he is sick." Pray, what is it to you whether Philip is sick or not? Supposing he should die, you would raise up another Philip, if you continue thus regardless of your interest.

Many, I know, delight more in nothing than in circulating all the rumours they hear as articles of intelligence. Some cry, Philip hath joined with the Lacedæmonians, and they are concerting the destruction of Thebes. Others assure us, he hath sent an embassy to the king of Persia; others, that he is fortifying places in Illyria Thus we all go about framing our several tales. I do believe indeed, Athenians! that he is intoxicated with his greatness, and does entertain his imagination with many such visionary projects, as he sees no power rising to oppose him. But I cannot be persuaded that he hath so taken his measures, that the weakest amongst us (for the weakest they are who spread such rumours) know what he is next to do. Let us disregard these tales. Let us only be persuaded of this, that he is our enemy; that we have long been subject to his insolence; that whatever we expected to have been done for us by others, hath turned against us; that all the resource left, is in ourselves; and that if we are not inclined to carry our arms abroad, we should be forced to engage him at home. Let us be persuaded of these things, and then we shall come to a proper determination, and be no longer guided by rumours. We need not be solicitous to know what particular events are to happen. We may be well assured that nothing good can happen, unless we give due attention to our own affairs, and act as becomes Athenians.

'Were it a point generally acknowledged,* that Philip is now at actual war with the state, the only thing under deliberation would then be, how to oppose him with most safety. But since there are persons so strangely infatuated, that although he has already possessed himself of a considerable part of our dominions; although he is still extending his conquests; although all Greece has suffered by his injustice; yet they can hear it repeated in this assembly, that it is some of us who seek to embroil the state in war: this suggestion must first be guarded against. I readily admit, that were it in our power to determine whether we should be at peace or war, peace, if it depended on our option, is most desirable to be embraced. But if the other party hath drawn the sword, and gathered his armies round him; if he amuses us with the name of peace, while, in fact, he is proceeding to the greatest hostilities; what is left for us but to oppose him? If any man takes that for a peace, which is only a preparation for his leading his forces directly upon us, after his other conquests, I hold that man's mind to be disordered. At least, it is only our conduct towards Philip, not Philip's conduct towards us, that is to be termed a peace; and this is the peace for which Philip's treasures are expended, for which his gold is so liberally scattered among

* Phil. iii

our venal orators, that he may be at liberty to carry on the war against you, while you make no war on him.

'Heavens! is there any man of a right mind who would judge of peace or war by words, and not by actions? Is there any man so weak as to imagine that it is for the sake of those paltry villages of Thrace, Drongylus, and Cabyle, and Mastira, that Philip is now braving the utmost dangers, and enduring the severity of toils and seasons; and that he has no designs upon the arsenals, and the navies, and the silver mines of Athens? or that he will take up his winter-quarters among the cells and dungeons of Thrace, and leave you to enjoy all your revenues in peace? But you wait perhaps till he declare war against you.—He will never do so—no, though he were at your gates. He will still be assuring you that he is not at war. Such were his professions to the people of Oreum, when his forces were in the heart of their country; such his professions to those of Pheræ, until the moment he attacked their walls: and thus he amused the Olynthians till he came within a few miles of them, and then he sent them a message, that either they must quit their city, or he his kingdom. He would indeed be the absurdest of mankind, if, while you suffer his outrages to pass unnoticed, and are wholly engaged in accusing and prosecuting one another, he should, by declaring war, put an end to your private contests, warn you to direct all your zeal against him, and deprive his pensioners of their most specious pretence for suspending your resolutions, that of his not being at war with the state. I, for my part, hold and declare, that by his attack of the Megaræans, by his attempts upon the liberty of Eubæa, by his late incursions into Thrace, by his practices in Peloponnesus, Philip has violated the treaty; he is in a state of hostility with you; unless you shall affirm, that he who prepares to besiege a city, is still at peace, until the walls be actually invested. The man whose designs, whose whole conduct tends to reduce me to subjection, that man is at war with me, though not a blow hath yet been given, nor a sword drawn.

'All Greece, all the barbarian world, is too narrow for this man's ambition. And, though we Greeks see and hear all this, we send no embassies to each other; we express no resentment; but into such wretchedness are we sunk, that even to this day we neglect what our interest and duty demand. Without engaging in associations, or forming confederacies, we look with unconcern upon Philip's growing power; each fondly imagining, that the time in which another is destroyed, is so much time gained to him; although no man can be ignorant, that, like the regular periodical return of a fever, he is coming upon those who think themselves the most remote from danger.—And what is the cause of our present passive disposition? For some cause sure there must be, why

the Greeks, who have been so zealous heretofore in defence of liberty, are now so prone to slavery. The cause, Athenians! is, that a principle, which was formerly fixed in the minds of all, now exists no more; a principle which conquered the opulence of Persia, maintained the freedom of Greece, and triumphed over the powers of sea and land. That principle was, a unanimous abhorrence of all those who accepted bribes from princes, that were enemies to the liberties of Greece. To be convicted of bribery, was then a crime altogether unpardonable. Neither orators, nor generals, would then sell for gold the favourable conjunctures which fortune put into their hands. No gold could impair our firm concord at home, our hatred and diffidence of tyrants and barbarians. But now all things are exposed to sale, as in a public market. Corruption has introduced such manners as have proved the bane and destruction of our country. Is a man known to have received foreign money? People envy him. Does he own it? They laugh. Is he convicted in form? They forgive him: so universally has this contagion diffused itself among us.

'If there be any who, though not carried away by bribes, yet are struck with terror, as if Philip was something more than human, they may see, upon a little consideration, that he hath exhausted all those artifices to which he owes his present elevation; and that his affairs are now ready to decline. For I myself, Athenians! should think Philip really to be dreaded, if I saw him raised by honourable means.—When forces join in harmony and affection, and one common interest unites confederating powers, then they share the toils with alacrity, and endure distresses with perseverance. But when extravagant ambition and lawless power, as in the case of Philip, have aggrandized a single person, the first pretence, the slightest accident, overthrows him, and dashes his greatness to the ground. For, it is not possible, Athenians! it is not possible, to found a lasting power upon injustice, perjury, and treachery. These may perhaps succeed for once, and borrow for a while, from hope, a gay and flourishing appearance. But time betrays their weakness, and they fall of themselves to ruin. For, as in structures of every kind, the lower parts should have the firmest stability, so the grounds and principles of great enterprises should be justice and truth. But this solid foundation is wanting to all the enterprises of Philip.

'Hence, among his confederates, there are many who hate, who distrust, who envy him. If you will exert yourselves, as your honour and your interest require, you will not only discover the weakness and insincerity of his confederates, but the ruinous condition also of his own kingdom. For you are not to imagine, that the inclinations of his subjects are the same with those of their prince. He thirsts for glory; but they have no part in this ambi

tion. Harassed by those various excursions he is ever making, they groan under perpetual calamity; torn from their business and their families; and beholding commerce excluded from their coasts. All those glaring exploits, which have given him his apparent greatness, have wasted his natural strength, his own kingdom, and rendered it much weaker than it originally was. Besides, his profligacy and baseness, and those troops of buffoons, and dissolute persons, whom he caresses and keeps constantly about him, are, to men of just discernment, great indications of the weakness of his mind. At present, his successes cast a shade over these things; but let his arms meet with the least disgrace, his feebleness will appear, and his character be exposed. For, as in our bodies, while a man is in apparent health, the effect of some inward debility, which has been growing upon him, may, for a time, be concealed; but, as soon as it comes the length of disease, all his secret infirmities shew themselves in whatever part of his frame the disorder is lodged: so, in states and monarchies, while they carry on a war abroad, many defects escape the general eye; but, as soon as war reaches their own territory, their infirmities come forth to general observation.

'Fortune has great influence in all human affairs; but I, for my part, should prefer the fortune of Athens, with the least degree of vigour in asserting your cause, to this man's fortune. For we have many better reasons to depend upon the favour of Heaven than this man. But, indeed, he who will not exert his own strength, hath no title to depend either on his friends, or on the gods. Is it at all surprising that he, who is himself ever amidst the labours and dangers of the field: who is every where; whom no opportunity escapes; to whom no season is unfavourable; should be superior to you, who are wholly engaged in contriving delays, and framing decrees, and inquiring after news? The contrary would be much more surprising, if we, who have never hitherto acted as became a state engaged in war, should conquer one who acts, in every instance, with indefatigable vigilance. It is this, Athenians! it is this which gives him all his advantage against you. Philip, constantly surrounded by his troops, and perpetually engaged in projecting his designs, can, in a moment, strike the blow where he pleases. But we, when any accident alarms us, first appoint our trierarchs; then we allow them to exchange by substitution; then the supplies are considered; next, we resolve to man our fleet with strangers and foreigners; then find it necessary to supply their place ourselves. In the midst of these delays, what we are failing to defend, the enemy is already master of; for the time of action is spent by us in preparing; and the issues of war will not wait for our slow and irresolute measures.

'Consider then your present situation, and make such provision

as the urgent danger requires. Talk not of your ten thousands, or your twenty thousand foreigners; of those armies which appear so magnificent on paper only; great and terrible in your decrees, in execution weak and contemptible. But let your army be made up chiefly of the native forces of the state; let it be an Athenian strength to which you are to trust; and whomsoever you appoint as general, let them be entirely under his guidance and authority. For, ever since our armies have been formed of foreigners alone, their victories have been gained over our allies and confederates only, while our enemies have risen to an extravagance of power.'

The orator goes on to point out the number of forces which should be raised; the places of their destination; the season of the year in which they should set out; and then proposes in form his motion, as we would call it, or his decree, for the necessary supply of money, and for ascertaining the funds from which it should be raised. Having finished all that relates to the business under deliberation, he concludes these orations on public affairs commonly with no longer peroration than the following which terminates the first Philippic: 'I, for my part, have never, upon any occasion, chosen to court your favour by speaking, any thing but what I was convinced would serve you. And on this occasion, you have heard my sentiments freely declared, without art, and without reserve. I should have been pleased, indeed, that, as it is for your advantage, to have your true interest laid before you, so I might have been assured, that he who layeth it before you would share the advantage. But uncertain as I know the consequence to be with respect to myself, I yet determined to speak, because I was convinced that these measures, if pursued, must prove beneficial to the public. And, of all those opinions which shall be offered to your acceptance, may the gods determine that to be chosen which will best advance the general welfare.'

These extracts may serve to give some imperfect idea of the manner of Demosthenes. For a juster and more complete one, recourse must be had to the excellent original.

LECTURE XXVIII.

ELOQUENCE OF THE BAR—ANALYSIS OF CICERO'S ORATION FOR CLUENTIUS.

I TREATED, in the last Lecture, of what is peculiar to the eloquence of popular assemblies. Much of what was said on that head is applicable to the Eloquence of the Bar, the next great scene of public speaking, to which I now proceed, and my observations upon

which will therefore be the shorter. All, however, that was said in the former Lecture must not be applied to it; and it is of importance, that I begin with shewing where the distinction lies.

In the first place, the ends of speaking at the bar, and in popular assemblies, are commonly different. In popular assemblies, the great object is persuasion; the orator aims at determining the hearers to some choice or conduct, as good, fit, or useful. For accomplishing this end, it is incumbent on him to apply himself to all the principles of action in our nature; to the passions and to the heart, as well as to the understanding. But, at the bar, conviction is the great object. There, it is not the speaker's business to persuade the judges to what is good or useful, but to shew them what is just and true; and, of course, it is chiefly, or solely, to the understanding that his eloquence is addressed. This is a characteristical difference which ought ever to be kept in view.

In the next place, speakers at the bar address themselves to one, or to a few judges, and these, too, persons generally of age, gravity, and authority of character. There they have not those advantages which a mixed and numerous assembly affords for employing all the arts of speech, even supposing their subject to admit them. Passion does not rise so easily; the speaker is heard more coolly; he is watched over more severely; and would expose himself to ridicule, by attempting that high vehement tone, which is only proper in speaking to a multitude.

In the last place, the nature and management of the subjects which belong to the bar, require a very different species of oratory from that of popular assemblies. In the latter, the speaker has a much wider range. He is seldom confined to any precise rule; he can fetch his topics from a great variety of quarters; and employ every illustration which his fancy or imagination suggests. But, at the bar, the field of speaking is limited to precise law and statute. Imagination is not allowed to take its scope. The advocate has always lying before him the line, the square, and the compass. These, it is his principal business to be continually applying to the subjects under debate.

For these reasons, it is clear, that the eloquence of the bar is of a much more limited, more sober, and chastened kind, than that of popular assemblies; and, for similar reasons, we must beware of considering even the judicial orations of Cicero or Demosthenes as exact models of the manner of speaking, which is adapted to the present state of the bar. It is necessary to warn young lawyers of this; because, though these were pleadings spoken in civil or criminal causes, yet, in fact, the nature of the bar anciently, both in Greece and Rome, allowed a much nearer approach to popular eloquence, than what it now does. This was owing chiefly to two causes.

First, because in the ancient judicial orations, strict law was much less an object of attention than it is become among us. In the days of Demosthenes and Cicero, the municipal statutes were few, simple, and general; and the decision of causes was trusted, in a great measure, to the equity and common sense of the judges. Eloquence, much more than jurisprudence, was the study of those who were to plead causes. Cicero somewhere says, that three months' study was sufficient to make any man a complete civilian; nay, it was thought that one might be a good pleader at the bar, who had never studied law at all. For there were among the Romans a set of men called *Pragmatici*, whose office it was to give the orator all the law knowledge which the cause he was to plead required, and which he put into that popular form, and dressed up with those colours of eloquence, that were best fitted for influencing the judges before whom he spoke

We may observe next, that the civil and criminal judges, both in Greece and Rome, were commonly much more numerous than they are with us, and formed a sort of popular assembly. The renowned tribunal of the Areopagus at Athens consisted of fifty judges at the least.* Some make it to consist of a great many more. When Socrates was condemned, by what court it is uncertain, we are informed that no fewer than 280 voted against him. In Rome, the prætor, who was the proper judge both in civil and criminal causes, named for every cause of moment, the *Judices Selecti*, as they were called, who were always numerous, and had the office and power of both judge and jury. In the famous cause of Milo, Cicero spoke to fifty-one *Judices Selecti*, and so had the advantage of addressing his whole pleading, not to one or a few learned judges of the point of law, as is the case with us, but to an assembly of Roman citizens. Hence all those arts of popular eloquence, which we find the Roman orator so frequently employing, and probably with much success. Hence tears and commiseration are so often made use of as the instruments of gaining a cause. Hence certain practices, which would be reckoned theatrical among us, were common at the Roman bar; such as introducing not only the accused person dressed in deep mourning, but presenting to the judges his family, and his young children, endeavouring to move them by their cries and tears.

For these reasons, on account of the wide difference between the ancient and modern state of the bar, to which we may add also the difference in the turn of ancient and modern eloquence, which I formerly took notice of, too strict an imitation of Cicero's manner of pleading would now be extremely injudicious. To great advantage he may still be studied by every speaker at the bar. In the address with which he opens his subject, and the

* Vide Potter, Antiq. vol. i. p. 102.

insinuation he employs for gaining the favour of the judges; in the distinct arrangement of his facts; in the gracefulness of his narration; in the conduct and exposition of his arguments, he may and he ought to be imitated. A higher pattern cannot be set before us; but one who should imitate him also in his exaggeration and amplifications, in his diffuse and pompous declamation, and in his attempts to raise passion, would now make himself almost as ridiculous at the bar, as if he should appear there in the *toga* of a Roman lawyer.

Before I descend to more particular directions concerning the eloquence of the bar, I must be allowed to take notice, that the foundation of a lawyer's reputation and success must always be laid in a profound knowledge of his own profession. Nothing is of such consequence to him, or deserves more his deep and serious study. For whatever his abilities as a speaker may be, if his knowledge of the law be reckoned superficial, few will choose to commit their cause to him. Besides previous study, and a proper stock of knowledge attained, another thing highly material to the success of every pleader, is a diligent and painful attention to every cause with which he is intrusted, so as to be thoroughly master of all the facts and circumstances relating to it. On this the ancient rhetoricians insist with great earnestness, and justly represent it as a necessary basis to all the eloquence that can be exerted in pleading. Cicero tells us (under the character of Antonius in the second book De Oratore), that he always conversed at full length with every client who came to consult him; that he took care there should be no witness to their conversation, in order that his client might explain himself more freely; that he was wont to start every objection, and to plead the cause of the adverse party with him, that he might come at the whole truth, and be fully prepared on every point of the business; and that, after the client had retired, he used to balance all the facts with himself, under three different characters, his own, that of the judge, and that of the advocate on the opposite side. He censures very severely those of the profession who declined taking so much trouble; taxing them not only with shameful negligence, but with dishonesty and breach of trust.* To the same purpose Quinctilian, in the eighth chapter of his last book, delivers a great many excellent rules concerning all the methods which a lawyer should

* 'Equidem soleo dare operam, ut de suâ quisque re me ipse doceat; et nequis alius adsit, quo liberius loquatur; et agere adversarii causam, ut ille agat suam; et quicquid de suâ re cogitaret, in medium proferat. Itaque cùm ille decessit, tres personas unus sustineo, summâ animi equitate; meam, adversarii, judicis.—Nonnulli dum operam suam multam existimari volunt, ut toto foro volitare, et a causa ad causam ire videantur, causas dicunt incognitas. In quo est illa quidem magna offensio, vel negligentiæ susceptis rebus, vel perfidiæ receptis; sed etiam illa, major opinione, quod nemo potest de eâ re quam non novit, non turpissimè dicere.'

employ for attaining the most thorough knowledge of the cause he is to plead; again and again recommending patience and attention in conversation with clients, and observing very sensibly, 'Non tam obest audire supervacua, quam ignorare necessaria. Frequenter enim et vulnus, et remedium, in iis orator inveniet quæ litigatori in neutram partem habere momentum videbantur.'*

Supposing an advocate to be thus prepared, with all the knowledge which the study of the law in general, and of that cause which he is to plead in particular, can furnish him, I must next observe, that eloquence in pleading is of the highest moment for giving support to a cause. It were altogether wrong to infer, that because the ancient popular and vehement manner of pleading is now in a great measure superseded, there is, therefore, no room for eloquence at the bar, and that the study of it is become superfluous. Though the manner of speaking be changed, yet still there is a right and a proper manner, which deserves to be studied as much as ever. Perhaps there is no scene of public speaking where eloquence is more necessary. For, on other occasions, the subject on which men speak in public, is frequently sufficient, by itself, to interest the hearers. But the dryness and subtilty of the subjects generally agitated at the bar, require, more than any other, a certain kind of eloquence in order to command attention; in order to give proper weight to the arguments that are employed, and to prevent any thing which the pleader advances from passing unregarded. The effect of good speaking is always very great. There is as much difference in the impression made upon the hearers, by a cold, dry, and confused speaker, and that made by one who pleads the same cause with elegance, order, and strength, as there is between our conception of an object, when it is presented to us in a dim light, and when we behold it in a full and clear one.

It is no small encouragement to eloquence at the bar, that of all the liberal professions, none gives fairer play to genius and abilities than that of the advocate. He is less exposed than some others, to suffer by the arts of rivalry, by popular prejudices, or secret intrigues. He is sure of coming forward according to his merit: for he stands forth every day to view; he enters the list boldly with his competitors; every appearance which he makes is an appeal to the public; whose decision seldom fails of being just, because it is impartial. Interest and friends may set forward a young pleader with peculiar advantages beyond others, at the beginning; but they can do no more than open the field to him. A reputation resting on these assistances will soon fall. Spectators

* 'To listen to something that is superfluous can do no hurt; whereas to be ignorant of something that is material, may be highly prejudicial. The advocate will frequently discover the weak side of a cause, and learn at the same time, what is the proper defence, from circumstances which, to the party himself, appeared to be of little or no moment.'

remark, judges decide, parties watch; and to him will the multitude of clients never fail to resort, who gives the most approved specimens of his knowledge, eloquence, and industry.

It must be laid down for a first principle, that the eloquence suited to the bar, whether in speaking, or in writing law-papers, is of the calm and temperate kind, and connected with close reasoning. Sometimes a little play may be allowed to the imagination, in order to enliven a dry subject, and to give relief to the fatigue of attention; but this liberty must be taken with a sparing hand. For a florid style, and a sparkling manner, never fail to make the speaker be heard with a jealous ear by the judge. They detract from his weight, and always produce a suspicion of his failing in soundness and strength of argument.* It is purity and neatness of expression which is chiefly to be studied; a style perspicuous and proper, which shall not be needlessly overcharged with the pedantry of law terms, and where, at the same time, no affectation shall appear of avoiding these, when they are suitable and necessary.

Verbosity is a common fault, of which the gentlemen of this profession are accused; and into which the habit of speaking and writing so hastily, and with so little preparation, as they are often obliged to do, almost unavoidably betrays them. It cannot, therefore, be too much recommended to those who are beginning to practise at the bar, that they should early study to guard against this, while as yet they have full leisure for preparation. Let them form themselves, especially in the papers which they write, to the habit of a strong and correct style; which expresses the same thing much better in a few words, than is done by the accumulation of intricate and endless periods. If this habit be once acquired, it will become natural to them afterward, when the multiplicity of business shall force them to compose in a more precipitant manner. Whereas, if the practice of a loose and negligent style has been suffered to become familiar, it will not be in their power, even upon occasions when they wish to make an unusual effort, to express themselves with energy and grace.

Distinctness is a capital property in speaking at the bar. This should be shewn chiefly in two things: first, in stating the question; in shewing clearly what is the point in debate; what we admit; what we deny; and where the line of division begins between us and the adverse party. Next, it should be shewn in the order and arrangement of all the parts of the pleading. In every sort of oration, a clear method is of the utmost consequence; but in those embroiled and difficult cases which belong to the bar, it is almost all in all. Too much pains, therefore, cannot be taken in previously studying the plan and method. If there be indistinctness and disorder there, we can have no success in convincing; we leave the whole cause in darkness.

With respect to the conduct of narration and argumentation, I shall hereafter make several remarks, when I come to treat of the component parts of a regular oration. I shall at present only observe, that the narration of facts at the bar, should always be as concise as the nature of them will admit. Facts are always of the greatest consequence to be remembered during the course of the pleading; but if the pleader be tedious in his manner of relating them, and needlessly circumstantial, he lays too great a load upon the memory. Whereas, by cutting off all superfluous circumstances in his recital, he adds strength to the material facts: he both gives a clearer view of what he relates, and makes the impression of it more lasting. In argumentation, again, I would incline to give scope to a more diffuse manner at the bar than on some other occasions. For, in popular assemblies, where the subject of debate is often a plain question, arguments, taken from known topics, gain strength by their conciseness. But the obscurity of law points frequently requires the arguments to be spread out, and placed in different lights in order to be fully apprehended.

When the pleader comes to refute the arguments employed by his adversary, he should be on his guard not to do them injustice, by disguising or placing them in a false light. The deceit is soon discovered: it will not fail of being exposed; and tends to impress the judge and the hearers with distrust of the speaker, as one who either wants discernment to perceive, or wants fairness to admit, the strength of the reasoning on the other side. Whereas, when they see that he states, with accuracy and candour, the arguments which have been used against him, before he proceeds to combat them, a strong prejudice is created in his favour. They are naturally led to think, that he has a clear and full conception of all that can be said on both sides of the argument; that he has entire confidence in the goodness of his own cause; and does not attempt to support it by any artifice or concealment. The judge is thereby inclined to receive, much more readily, the impressions which are given him by a speaker, who appears both so fair and so penetrating. There is no part of the discourse, in which the orator has greater opportunity of shewing a masterly address, than when he sets himself to represent the reasonings of his antagonists, in order to refute them.

Wit may sometimes be of service at the bar, especially in a lively reply, by which we may throw ridicule on something that has been said on the other side. But though the reputation of wit be dazzling to a young pleader, I would never advise him to rest his strength upon this talent. It is not his business to make an audience laugh, but to convince the judge; and seldom or never did any one rise to eminence in his profession, by being a witty lawyer.

A proper degree of warmth in pleading a cause is always of use. Though, in speaking to a multitude, greater vehemence be natural; yet, in addressing ourselves even to a single man, the warmth which arises from seriousness and earnestness, is one of the most powerful means of persuading him. An advocate personates his client; he has taken upon him the whole charge of his interests; he stands in his place. It is improper, therefore, and has a bad effect upon the cause, if he appears indifferent and unmoved; and few clients will be fond of trusting their interests in the hands of a cold speaker.

At the same time, he must beware of prostituting his earnestness and sensibility so much as to enter with equal warmth into every cause that is committed to him, whether it can be supposed really to excite his zeal or not. There is a dignity of character, which it is of the utmost importance for every one in this profession to support. For it must never be forgotten, that there is no instrument of persuasion more powerful, than an opinion of probity and honour in the person who undertakes to persuade.* It is scarcely possible for any hearer to separate altogether the impression made by the character of him that speaks, from the things that he says. However secretly and imperceptibly, it will be always lending its weight to one side or other; either detracting from, or adding to, the authority and influence of his speech. This opinion of honour and probity must, therefore, be carefully preserved, both by some degree of delicacy in the choice of causes, and by the manner of conducting them. And though, perhaps, the nature of the profession may render it extremely difficult to carry this delicacy its utmost length, yet there are attentions to this point, which, as every good man for virtue's sake, so every prudent man for reputation's sake, will find to be necessary. He will always decline embarking in causes that are odious and manifestly unjust; and, when he supports a doutful cause, he will lay the chief stress upon such arguments as appear to his own judgment the most tenable; reserving his zeal and his indignation for cases where injustice and iniquity are flagrant. But of the personal qualities and virtues requisite in public speakers, I shall afterward have occasion to discourse.

These are the chief directions which have occurred to me concerning the peculiar strain of speaking at the bar. In order to illustrate the subject farther, I shall give a short analysis of one of Cicero's pleadings, or judicial orations. I have chosen that, 'pro Cluentio.' The celebrated one, 'pro Milone,' is more laboured and showy; but it is too declamatory. That, 'pro Cluentio,' comes nearer the strain of a modern pleading; and though it has the dis-

* 'Plurimum ad omnia momenti est in hoc positum, si vir bonus creditur. Sic enim contingit, ut non studium advocati, videatur afferre, sed pene testis fidem.'—QUINCT l. iv. c. i.

advantage of being very long, and complicated too in the subject, yet it is one of the most chaste, correct, and forcible of all Cicero's judicial orations, and well deserves attention for its conduct.

Avitus Cluentius, a Roman knight of splendid family and fortunes, had accused his step-father Oppianicus of an attempt to poison him. He prevailed in the prosecution; Oppianicus was condemned and banished. But as rumours arose of the judges having been corrupted by money in this cause, these gave occasion to much popular clamour, and had thrown a heavy odium on Cluentius. Eight years afterward Oppianicus died. An accusation was brought against Cluentius of having poisoned him, together with a charge also of having bribed the judges in the former trial to condemn him. In this action Cicero defends him. The accusers were Sassia, the mother of Cluentius, and widow of Oppianicus, and young Oppianicus, the son. Q. Naso, the prætor, was judge, together with a considerable number of 'Judices Selecti.'

The introduction of the oration is simple and proper, taken from no common-place topic, but from the nature of the cause. It begins with taking notice, that the whole oration of the accuser was divided into two parts.* These two parts were, the charge of having poisoned Oppianicus; on which the accuser, conscious of having no proof, did not lay the stress of his cause; but rested it chiefly on the other charge of formerly corrupting the judges, which was capital in certain cases by the Roman law. Cicero purposes to follow him in this method, and to apply himself chiefly to the vindication of his client from the latter charge. He makes several proper observations on the danger of judges suffering themselves to be swayed by a popular cry, which often is raised by faction, and directed against the innocent. He acknowledges that Cluentius had suffered much and long by reproach, on account of what had passed at the former trial; but begs only a patient and attentive hearing, and assures the judges, that he will state every thing relating to that matter so fairly and so clearly, as shall give them entire satisfaction. A great appearance of candour reigns throughout this introduction.

The crimes with which Cluentius was charged, were heinous. A mother accusing her son, and accusing him of such actions, as having first bribed judges to condemn her husband, and having afterward poisoned him, were circumstances that naturally raised strong prejudices against Cicero's client. The first step,

* 'Animadverti, Judices, omnem accusatoris orationem in duas divisam esse partes; quarum altera mihi niti et magnopere confidere videbatur, invidiâ jam inveteratâ judicii Juniani, altera tantummodo consuetudinis causâ, timidè et diffidentur attingere rationem veneficii criminum; quâ de re lege est hæc questio constituta. Itaque mihi certum est hanc eandem distributionem invidiæ et criminum sic in defensione servare, ut omnes intelligant, nihil me nec subterfugere voluisse reticendo, nec obscurare dicendo.'

therefore, necessary for the orator, was to remove these prejudices; by shewing what sort of persons Cluentius's mother, and her husband Oppianicus were; and thereby turning the edge of public indignation against them. The nature of the cause rendered this plan altogether proper, and in similar situations it is fit to be imitated. He executes his plan with much eloquence and force; and, in doing it, lays open such a scene of infamy and complicated guilt, as gives a shocking picture of the manners of that age; and such as would seem incredible, did not Cicero refer to the proof that was taken in the former trial, of the facts which he alleges.

Sassia, the mother, appears to have been altogether of an abandoned character. Soon after the death of her first husband, the father of Cluentius, she fell in love with Aurius Melinus, a young man of illustrious birth and great fortune, who was married to her own daughter. She prevailed with him to divorce her daughter, and then she married him herself.* This Melinus being afterward, by the means of Oppianicus, involved in Sylla's proscription, and put to death; and Sassia being left for the second time a widow, and in a very opulent situation, Oppianicus himself made his addresses to her. She, not startled at the impudence of the proposal, nor at the thoughts of marrying one, whose hands had been imbrued in her former husband's blood, objected only, as Cicero says, to Oppianicus having two sons by his present wife. Oppianicus removed the objection, by having his sons privately despatched; and then divorcing his wife, the infamous match was concluded between him and Sassia. These flagrant deeds are painted, as we may well believe, with the highest colours of Cicero's eloquence, which here has a very proper field. Cluentius, as a man of honour, could no longer live on any tolerable terms with a woman, a mother only in the name, who had loaded herself and all her family with so much dishonour; and hence the feud which had ever since subsisted between them, and had involved her unfortunate son in so much trouble and persecution. As for Oppianicus, Cicero gives a sort of history of his life, and a full detail of his crimes; and by what he relates, Oppianicus appears to have been a man daring, fierce, and cruel, insatiable in avarice and ambition; trained and hardened in all the crimes which those

* 'Lectum illum genialem quem biennio ante filiæ suæ nubenti straverat, in eâdem domo sibi ornari et sterni, expulsâ atque exturbatâ filiâ, jubet. Nubit genero socrus, nullis auspicibus, funestis omnibus omnium. O mulieris scelus incredibile, et præter hanc unam, in omni vitâ inauditum! O audaciam singularem! non timuisse, si minus vim Deorum, hominumque famam, at illam ipsam noctem, facesque illas nuptiales? non limen cubiculi? non cubile filiæ? non parietes denique ipsos superiorum testes nuptiarum? perfregit ac prostravit omnia cupiditate et furore? vicit pudorem libido; timorem audacia; rationem amentia.' The warmth of Cicero's eloquence, which this passage beautifully exemplifies, is here fully justified by the subject.

turbulent times of Marius and Sylla's proscriptions produced: 'Such a man,' says our orator, 'as, in place of being surprised that he was condemned, you ought rather to wonder that he had escaped so long.'

And now having prepared the way by all this narration, which is clear and elegant, he enters on the history of that famous trial in which his client was charged with corrupting the judges. Both Cluentius and Oppianicus were of the city Larinum. In a public contest about the rights of the freemen of that city, they had taken opposite sides, which imbittered the misunderstanding already subsisting between them. Sassia, now the wife of Oppianicus, pushed him on to the destruction of her son, whom she had long hated, as one who was conscious of her crimes; and as Cluentius was known to have made no will, they expected, upon his death, to succeed to his fortune. The plan was formed, therefore, to despatch him by poison; which, considering their former conduct, is no incredible part of the story. Cluentius was at that time indisposed: the servant of his physician was to be bribed to give him poison, and one Fabricius, an intimate friend of Oppianicus, was employed in the negotiation. The servant having made the discovery, Cluentius first prosecuted Scamander, a freedman of Fabricius, in whose custody the poison was found; and afterward Fabricius, for this attempt upon his life. He prevailed in both actions; and both of these persons were condemned by the voices, almost unanimously, of the judges.

Of both these 'prejudicia,' as our author calls them, or previous trials, he gives a very particular account; and rests upon them a great part of his argument, as, in neither of them, there was the least charge or suspicion of any attempt to corrupt the judges. But in both these trials, Oppianicus was pointed at plainly; in both Scamander and Fabricius were prosecuted as only the instruments and ministers of his cruel designs. As a natural consequence, therefore, Cluentius immediately afterward raised a third prosecution, against Oppianicus himself, the contriver and author of the whole. It was in this prosecution, that money was said to have been given to the judges; all Rome was filled with the report of it, and the alarm loudly raised, that no man's life or liberty was safe, if such dangerous practices were not checked. By the following arguments, Cicero defends his client against this heavy charge of the 'crimen corrupti judicii.'

He reasons first, that there was not the least reason to suspect it; seeing the condemnation of Oppianicus was a direct and necessary consequence of the judgments given against Scamander and Fabricius, in the two former trials; trials, that were fair and uncorrupted, to the satisfaction of the whole world. Yet by these, the road was laid clearly open to the detection of Oppianicus's guilt.

His instruments and ministers being once condemned, and by the very same judges too, nothing could be more absurd than to raise a cry about an innocent person being circumvented by bribery, when it was evident, on the contrary, that a guilty person was now brought into judgment, under such circumstances, that unless the judges were altogether inconsistent with themselves, it was impossible for him to be acquitted.

He reasons next, that, if in this trial there were any corruption of the judges by money, it was infinitely more probable, that corruption should have proceeded from Oppianicus than from Cluentius. For, setting aside the difference of character between the two men, the one fair, the other flagitious; what motive had Cluentius to try so odious and dangerous an experiment, as that of bribing judges? Was it not much more likely that he should have had recourse to this last remedy, who saw and knew himself and his cause to be in the utmost danger; than the other, who had a cause clear in itself, and of the issue of which, in consequence of the two previous sentences given by the same judges, he had full reason to be confident? Was it not much more likely, that he should bribe, who had every thing to fear; whose life, and liberty, and fortune, were at stake; than he who had already prevailed in a material part of his charge, and who had no farther interest in the issue of the prosecution, than as justice was concerned?

In the third place, he asserts it as a certain fact, that Oppianicus did attempt to bribe the judges: that the corruption in this trial, so much complained of, was employed, not by Cluentius, but against him. He calls on Titus Attius, the orator on the opposite side; he challenges him to deny, if he can, or if he dare, that Stalenus, one of the thirty-two 'Judices Selecti,' did receive money from Oppianicus; he names the sum that was given; he names the persons that were present, when, after the trial was over, Stalenus was obliged to refund the bribe. This is a strong fact, and would seem quite decisive. But, unluckily, a very cross circumstance occurs here. For this very Stalenus gave his voice to condemn Oppianicus. For this strange incident Cicero accounts in the following manner: Stalenus, says he, known to be a worthless man, and accustomed before to the like practices, entered into a treaty with Oppianicus to bring him off, and demanded for that purpose a certain sum, which he undertook to distribute among a competent number of the other judges. When he was once in possession of the money; when he found a greater treasure, than ever he had been master of, deposited in his empty and wretched habitation, he became very unwilling to part with any of it to his colleagues; and bethought himself of some means by which he could contrive to keep it all to himself. The scheme which he devised for this purpose, was, to promote the condemnation, in-

stead of the acquittal of Oppianicus; as, from a condemned person, he did not apprehend much danger of being called to account, or being obliged to make restitution. Instead, therefore, of endeavouring to gain any of his colleagues, he irritated such as he had influence with against Oppianicus, by first promising them money in his name, and afterward telling them, that Oppianicus had cheated him.* When sentence was to be pronounced, he had taken measures for being absent himself; but being brought by Oppianicus's lawyers from another court, and obliged to give his voice, he found it necessary to lead the way, in condemning the man whose money he had taken, without fulfilling the bargain which he had made with him.

By these plausible facts and reasonings, the character of Cluentius seems in a great measure cleared; and, what Cicero chiefly intended, the odium thrown upon the adverse party. But a difficult part of the orator's business still remained. There were several subsequent decisions of the prætor, the censors, and the senate, against the judges in this cause; which all proceeded, or seemed to proceed, upon this ground of bribery and corruption; for it is plain the suspicion prevailed, that if Oppianicus had given money to Stalenus, Cluentius had out-bribed him. To all these decisions, however, Cicero replies with much distinctness and subtilty of argument; though it might be tedious to follow him through all his reasonings on these heads. He shews, that the facts were, at that time, very indistinctly known; that the decisions appealed too were hastily given; that not one of them concluded directly against his client; and that, such as they were, they were entirely brought about by the inflammatory and factious harangues of Quinctius, the tribune of the people, who had been the agent and advocate of Oppianicus; and who, enraged at the defeat he had sustained, had employed all his tribunitial influence to raise a storm against the judges who condemned his client

At length, Cicero comes to reason concerning the point of law. The 'crimen corrupti judicii,' or the bribing of judges, was capital. In the famous 'Lex Cornelia de Sicariis,' was contained this clause (which we find still extant, Pandect. lib. xlviii. Tit. 10. § 1.): 'Qui judicem corruperit, vel corrumpendum curaverit, hâc lege teneatur.' This clause, however, we learn from Cicero, was restricted to magistrates and senators; and as Cluentius was only of

* 'Cum esset agens, sumptuosus, audax, callidus, perfidiosus, et cum domi suæ, miserrimis in locis, et inanissimis, tantum nummorum positum viderit, ad omnem malitiam et fraudem versare mentem suam cœpit. Demne Judicibus? mihi igitur ipsi, præter periculum et infamiam, quid quæretur? Siquis eum forte casus ex periculo eripuerit, nonne reddendum est? præcipitantem igitur impellamus, inquit, et perditum prosternamus. Capit hoc consilium, ut pecuniam quibusdam judicibus levissimis polliceatur, deinde eam postea supprimat; ut quoniam graves homines suâ sponte severè judicaturos putabat, hos qui leviores erant, destitutione iratos Oppianico redderet.'

the equestrian order, he was not, even supposing him guilty, within the law. Of this Cicero avails himself doubly; and as he shews here the most masterly address, I shall give a summary of his pleading on this part of the cause; 'You,' says he, to the advocate for the prosecutor, 'you, T. Attius, I know, had every where given it out, that I was to defend my client, not from facts, not upon the footing of innocence, but by taking advantage merely of the law in his behalf. Have I done so? I appeal to yourself. Have I sought to cover him behind a legal defence only? On the contrary, have I not pleaded his cause as if he had been a senator, liable, by the Cornelian law, to be capitally convicted; and shewn, that neither proof nor probable presumption lies against his innocence? In doing so, I must acquaint you, that I have complied with the desire of Cluentius himself. For when he first consulted me in this cause, and when I informed him that it was clear no action could be brought against him from the Cornelian law, he instantly besought and obtested me, that I would not rest his defence upon that ground; saying, with tears in his eyes, that his reputation was as dear to him as his life; and that what he sought as an innocent man, was not only to be absolved from any penalty, but to be acquitted in the opinion of all his fellow-citizens.

'Hitherto, then, I have pleaded this cause upon his plan. But my client must forgive me, if now I shall plead it upon my own. For I should be wanting to myself, and to that regard which my character and station require me to bear to the laws of the state, if I should allow any person to be judged of by a law which does not bind him. You, Attius, indeed, have told us, that it was a scandal and reproach, that a Roman knight should be exempted from those penalties to which a senator, for corrupting judges, is liable. But I must tell you, that it would be a much greater reproach, in a state that is regulated by law, to depart from the law. What safety have any of us in our persons, what security for our rights, if the law shall be set aside? By what title do you, Q. Naso, sit in that chair, and preside in this judgment? By what right, T. Attius, do you accuse, or do I defend? Whence all the solemnity and pomp of judges, and clerks, and officers, of which this house is full? Does not all proceed from the law, which regulates the whole departments of the state; which, as a common bond, holds its members together; and, like the soul within the body, actuates and directs all the public functions?* On what

* 'Ait Attius, indignum esse facinus, si senator judicio quemquam circumvenerit, eum legibus teneri; si Eques Romanus hoc idem fecerit, eum non teneri. Ut tibi concedam hoc indignum esse, tu mihi concedas necesse est multo esse indignius, in ea civitate quæ legibus contineatur, discedi a legibus. Hoc enim vinculum est hujus dignitatis quâ fruimur in republicâ: hoc fundamentum libertatis; hic fons equitatis; mens et animus, et consilium, et sententia civitatis posita est in legibus. Ut corpora nostra sine mente, sic civitas sine lege, suis partibus, ut nervis ac sanguine et mem-

ground, then, dare you speak lightly of the law, or move that in a criminal trial, judges should advance one step beyond what it permits them to go? The wisdom of our ancestors has found, that, as senators and magistrates enjoy higher dignities, and greater advantages, than other members of the state, the law should also, with regard to them, be more strict, and the purity and uncorruptedness of their morals be guarded by more severe sanctions. But if it be your pleasure that this institution should be altered, if you wish to have the Cornelian law, concerning bribery, extended to all ranks, then let us join, not in violating the law, but in proposing to have this alteration made by a new law. My client, Cluentius, will be the foremost in this measure, who now, while the old law subsists, rejected its defence, and required his cause to be pleaded, as if he had been bound by it. But, though he would not avail himself of the law, you are bound in justice not to stretch it beyond its proper limits.'

Such is the reasoning of Cicero on this head; eloquent, surely, and strong. As his manner is diffuse, I have greatly abridged it from the original, but have endeavoured to retain its force.

In the latter part of the oration, Cicero treats of the other accusation that was brought against Cluentius, of having poisoned Oppianicus. On this, it appears, his accusers themselves laid small stress; having placed their chief hope in overwhelming Cluentius with the odium of bribery in the former trial; and therefore, on this part of the cause, Cicero does not dwell long. He shews the improbability of the whole tale which they related concerning this pretended poisoning, and makes it appear to be altogether destitute of any shadow of proof.

Nothing, therefore, remains but the peroration, or conclusion of the whole. In this, as indeed throughout the whole of this oration, Cicero is uncommonly chaste, and, in the midst of much warmth and earnestness, keeps clear of turgid declamation. The peroration turns on two points; the indignation which the character and conduct of Sassia ought to excite, and the compassion due to a son, persecuted through his whole life by such a mother. He recapitulates the crimes of Sassia; her lewdness, her violation of every decorum, her incestuous marriages, her violence and cruelty. He places, in the most odious light, the eagerness and fury which she had shewn in the suit she was carrying on against her son; describes her journey from Larinum to Rome, with a train of attendants, and a great store of money, that she might employ every method for circumventing and oppressing him in his trial; while, in the whole course of her journey, she was so detested, as to

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bris, uti non potest. Legum ministri, magistratus; legum interpretes, judices; legum denique idcirco omnes simus servi, ut liber esse possimus. Quid est, Q. Naso, cur tu in hoc loco sedeas?' &c.

make a solitude wherever she lodged; she was shunned and avoided by all; her company, and her very looks, were reckoned contagious; the house was deemed polluted which was entered into by so abandoned a woman.* To this he opposes the character of Cluentius, fair, unspotted, and respectable. He produces the testimonies of the magistrates of Larinum in his favour, given in the most ample and honourable manner by a public decree, and supported by a great concourse of the most noted inhabitants, who were now present, to second every thing that Cicero could say in favour of Cluentius.

'Wherefore, judges,' he concludes, 'if you abominate crimes, stop the triumph of this impious woman, prevent this most unnatural mother from rejoicing in her son's blood. If you love virtue and worth, relieve this unfortunate man, who, for so many years, has been exposed to most unjust reproach through the calumnies raised against him by Sassia, Oppianicus, and all their adherents. Better far had it been for him to have ended his days at once by the poison which Oppianicus had prepared for him, than to have escaped those snares, if he must still be oppressed by an odium which I have shewn to be so unjust. But in you he trusts, in your clemency and your equity, that now, on a full and fair hearing of his cause, you will restore him to his honour; you will restore him to his friends and fellow-citizens, of whose zeal and high estimation of him you have seen such strong proofs; and will shew, by your decision, that though faction and calumny may reign for a while in popular meetings and harangues, in trial and judgment regard is paid to the truth only.'

I have given only a skeleton of this oration of Cicero. What I have principally aimed at, was to shew his disposition and method; his arrangement of facts, and the conduct and force of some of his main arguments. But, in order to have a full view of the subject, and of the art with which the orator manages it, recourse must be had to the original. Few of Cicero's orations contain a greater variety of facts and argumentations, which renders it difficult to analyze it fully. But for this reason I chose it, as an excellent

* 'Cùm appropinquare hujus judicium ei nuntiatum est, confestim hic advolavit; ne aut accusatoribus diligentia, aut pecunia testibus deesset; aut ne forte mater hoc sibi optatissimum spectaculum hujus sordium atque luctus, et tanti squaloris amitteret. Jam vero quod iter Romam hujus mulieris fuisse existimatis? Quod ego propter vicinitatem Aquinatium et Venafranorum ex multis comperi: quos concursus in his oppidis? Quantos et virorum et mulierum gemitus esse factos? Mulierem quandam Larino, atque illam usque a mari supero Romam proficisci cum magno comitatu et pecunià, quo faciliùs circumvenire judicio capitis, atque opprimere filium possit. Nemo erat illorum, pœne dicam, quin expiandum illum locum esse arbitraretur quacunque illa iter fecisset; nemo, quin terram ipsam violari, quæ mater est omnium, vestigiis consceleratæ matris putaret. Itaque nullo in oppido consistendi ei potestas fuit: nemo ex tot hospitibus inventus est qui non contagionem aspectûs fugeret.'

example of managing at the bar a complex and intricate cause, with order

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LECTURE XXIX.

ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

Before treating of the structure and component parts of a regular oration, I purposed making some observations on the peculiar strain, the distinguishing characters, of each of the three great kinds of public speaking. I have already treated of the eloquence of popular assemblies, and of the eloquence of the bar. The subject which remains for this Lecture is, the strain and spirit of that Eloquence which is suited to the Pulpit.

Let us begin with considering the advantages and disadvantages, which belong to this field of public speaking. The pulpit has plainly several advantages peculiar to itself. The dignity and importance of its subjects must be acknowledged superior to any other. They are such as ought to interest every one, and can be brought home to every man's heart; and such as admit, at the same time, both the highest embellishment in describing, and the greatest vehemence and warmth in enforcing them. The preacher has also great advantages in treating his subjects. He speaks not to one or a few judges, but to a large assembly. He is secure from all interruption. He is obliged to no replies, or extemporaneous efforts. He chooses his theme at leisure; and comes to the public with all the assistance which the most accurate premeditation can give him.

But, together with these advantages, there are also peculiar difficulties that attend the eloquence of the pulpit. The preacher, it is true, has no trouble in contending with an adversary; but then, debate and contention enliven genius, and procure attention. The pulpit orator is, perhaps, in too quiet possession of his field. His subjects of discourse are, in themselves, noble and important, but they are subjects trite and familiar. They have for ages employed so many speakers and so many pens; the public ear is so much accustomed to them, that it requires more than ordinary power of genius to fix attention. Nothing within the reach of art is more difficult, than to bestow on what is common, the grace of novelty. No sort of composition whatever is such a trial of skill, as where the merit of it lies wholly in the execution; not in giving any information that is new, not in convincing men of what they did not believe; but in dressing truth which they knew, and of which they were before convinced, in such colours as may most forcibly

affect their imagination and heart.* It is to be considered too, that the subject of the preacher generally confines him to abstract qualities, to virtues and vices; whereas, that of other popular speakers leads them to treat of persons; which is a subject that commonly interests the hearers more, and takes faster hold of the imagination. The preacher's business is solely to make you detest the crime. The pleader's to make you detest the criminal. He describes a living person; and with more facility rouses your indignation. From these causes it comes to pass, that though we have a great number of moderately good preachers, we have, however, so few that are singularly eminent. We are still far from perfection in the art of preaching; and perhaps there are few things in which it is more difficult to excel.† The object, however, is noble, and worthy, upon many accounts, of being pursued with zeal.

It may perhaps occur to some, that preaching is no proper subject of the art of eloquence. This, it may be said, belongs only to human studies and inventions: but the truths of religion, with the greater simplicity, and the less mixture of art they are set forth, are likely to prove the more successful. This objection would

* What I have said on this subject, coincides very much with the observations made by the famous M. Bruyère, in his 'Mœurs du Siècle,' when he is comparing the eloquence of the pulpit to that of the bar. 'L'eloquence de la chaire, en ce qui y entre d'humain, et du talent de l'orateur, est cachée, connue de peu de personnes, et d'une difficile execution. Il faut marcher par des chemins battus, dire ce qui a été dit, et ce que l'on prévoit que vous allez dire: les matières sont grandes, mais usées et triviales; les principes sûrs, mais dont les auditeurs pénétrent les conclusions d'une seule vûe: il y entre des sujets qui sont sublimes, mais qui peut traiter le sublime? —Le Prédicateur n'est point soutenu comme l'avocat par des faits toujours nouveaux, par de differens evénémens, par des aventures inouies; il ne s'exerce point sur les questions douteuses; il ne fait point valoir les violentes conjectures, et les présomptions; toutes choses, neanmoins, qui élevent le génie, lui donnent de la force, et de l'étendue, et qui contraignent bien moins l'éloquence, qu'elles ne le fixent, et le dirigent. Il doit, au contraire, tirer son discours d'une source commune, et où tout le monde puise; et s'il s'écarte de ces lieux communs, il n'est plus populaire; il est abstract ou déclamateur.'—The inference which he draws from these reflections is very just —'Il est plus aisé de prêcher que de plaider; mais plus difficile de bien prêcher que bien plaider.' Les Characteres, ou Mœurs de ce Siècle. p. 601.

† What I say here, and in other passages, of our being far from perfection in the art of preaching, and of there being few who are singularly eminent in it, is to be always understood as referring to an ideal view of the perfection of this art, which none, perhaps, since the days of the apostles, ever did, or ever will reach. But in that degree of the eloquence of the pulpit, which promotes, in a considerable measure, the great end of edification, and gives a just title to high reputation and esteem, there are many who hold a very honourable rank. I agree entirely in opinion with a candid judge (Dr. Campbell on Rhetoric, b. i. ch. 10.), who observes, that, considering how rare the talent of eloquence is among men, and considering all the disadvantages under which preachers labour, particularly from the frequency of this exercise, joined with the other duties of their office, to which fixed pastors are obliged, there is more reason to wonder that we hear so many instructive, and even eloquent sermons, than that we hear so few.

have weight, if eloquence were, as the persons who make such an objection commonly take it to be, an ostentatious and deceitful art, the study of words and of plausibility only, calculated to please and to tickle the ear. But against this idea of eloquence I have all along guarded. True eloquence is the art of placing truth in the most advantageous light for conviction and persuasion. This is what every good man who preaches the gospel not only may, but ought to have at heart. It is most intimately connected with the success of his ministry; and were it needful, as assuredly it is not, to reason any farther on this head, we might refer to the discourses of the prophets and apostles, as models of the most sublime and persuasive eloquence, adapted both to the imagination and the passions of men

An essential requisite, in order to preach well, is to have a just, and, at the same time, a fixed and habitual view of the end of preaching. For in no art can any man execute well, who has not a just idea of the end and object of that art. The end of all preaching is, to persuade men to become good. Every sermon, therefore, should be a persuasive oration. Not but that the preacher is to instruct and to teach, to reason and argue. All persuasion, as I shewed formerly, is to be founded on conviction. The understanding must always be applied to in the first place, in order to make a lasting impression on the heart; and he who would work on men's passions, or influence their practice, without first giving them just principles, and enlightening their minds, is no better than a mere declaimer. He may raise transient emotions, or kindle a passing ardour; but can produce no solid or lasting effect. At the same time, it must be remembered, that all the preacher's instructions are to be of a practical kind; and that persuasion must ever be his ultimate object. It is not to discuss some abstruse point, that he ascends the pulpit. It is not to illustrate some metaphysical truth, or to inform men of something which they never heard before; but it is to make them better men; it is to give them, at once, clear views, and persuasive impressions of religious truth. The eloquence of the pulpit, then, must be popular eloquence. One of the first qualities of preaching is to be popular; not in the sense of accommodation to the humours and prejudices of the people (which tends only to make a preacher contemptible), but in the true sense of the word, calculated to make an impression on the people; to strike and to seize their hearts. I scruple not therefore to assert, that the abstract and philosophical manner of preaching, however it may have sometimes been admired, is formed upon a very faulty idea, and deviates widely from the just plan of pulpit eloquence. Rational, indeed, a preacher ought always to be; he must give his audience clear ideas on every subject, and entertain them with sense, not with sound; but to be an inaccurate

reasoner will be small praise, if he be not a persuasive speaker also.

Now, if this be the proper idea of a sermon, a persuasive oration, one very material consequence follows, that the preacher himself, in order to be successful, must be a good man. In a preceding lecture, I endeavoured to shew, that on no subject can any man be truly eloquent, who does not utter the 'veræ voces ab imo pectore,' who does not speak the language of his own conviction, and his own feelings. If this holds, as, in my opinion, it does in other kinds of public speaking, it certainly holds in the highest degree in preaching. There, it is of the utmost consequence that the speaker firmly believe both the truth and the importance of those principles which he inculcates on others; and not only that he believe them speculatively, but have a lively and serious feeling of them. This will always give an earnestness and strength, a fervour of piety to his exhortations, superior in its effects to all the arts of studied eloquence; and, without it, the assistance of art will seldom be able to conceal the mere declaimer. A spirit of true piety would prove the most effectual guard against those errors which preachers are apt to commit. It would make their discourses solid, cogent, and useful; it would prevent those frivolous and ostentatious harangues, which have no other aim than merely to make a parade of speech, or amuse an audience; and perhaps the difficulty of attaining that pitch of habitual piety and goodness, which the perfection of pulpit eloquence would require, and of uniting it with that thorough knowledge of the world, and those other talents which are requisite for excelling in the pulpit, is one of the great causes why so few arrive at very high eminence in this sphere.

The chief characteristics of the eloquence suited to the pulpit, as distinguished from the other kinds of public speaking, appear to me to be these two, gravity and warmth. The serious nature of the subjects belonging to the pulpit, requires gravity; their importance to mankind, requires warmth. It is far from being either easy or common to unite these characters of eloquence. The grave, when it is predominant, is apt to run into a dull uniform solemnity. The warm, when it wants gravity, borders on the theatrical and light. The union of the two must be studied by all preachers as of the utmost consequence, both in the composition of their discourses, and in their manner of delivery. Gravity and warmth united, form that character of preaching which the French call 'onction;' the affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the preacher to the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make full impression on the hearts of his hearers.

Next to a just idea of the nature and object of pulpit eloquence,

the point of greatest importance to a preacher, is a proper choice of the subjects on which he preaches. To give rules for the choice of subjects for sermons, belongs to the theological more than to the rhetorical chair; only in general, they should be such as appear to the preacher to be the most useful, and the best accommodated to the circumstances of his audience. No man can be called eloquent, who speaks to an assembly on subjects, or in a strain, which none or few of them comprehend. The unmeaning applause which the ignorant give to what is above their capacity, common sense and common probity must teach every man to despise. Usefulness and true eloquence always go together; and no man can long be reputed a good preacher who is not acknowledged to be a useful one.

The rules which relate to the conduct of the different parts of a sermon, the introduction, division, argumentative and pathetic parts, I reserve till I come to treat of the conduct of a discourse in general; but some rules and observations, which respect a sermon as a particular species of composition, I shall now give, and I hope they may be of some use.

The first which I shall mention is, to attend to the unity of a sermon. Unity indeed is of great consequence in every composition; but in other discourses, where the choice and direction of the subject are not left to the speaker, it may be less in his power to preserve it. In a sermon, it must be always the preacher's own fault if he transgress it. What I mean by unity is, that there should be some one main point to which the whole strain of the sermon should refer. It must not be a bundle of different subjects strung together, but one object must predominate throughout. This rule is founded on what we all experience, that the mind can fully attend only to one capital object at a time. By dividing, you always weaken the impression. Now this unity, without which no sermon can either have much beauty, or much force, does not require that there should be no divisions or separate heads in the discourse, or that one single thought only should be, again and again, turned up to the hearers in different lights. It is not to be understood in so narrow a sense: it admits of some variety; it admits of under parts and appendages, provided always that so much union and connexion be preserved, as to make the whole concur in some one impression upon the mind. I may employ, for instance, several different arguments to enforce the love of God; I may also inquire, perhaps, into the causes of the decay of this virtue; still one great object is presented to the mind; but if, because my text says, 'He that loveth God, must love his brother also,' I should, therefore, mingle in one discourse arguments for the love of God and for the love of our neighbour, I should offend unpardonably against unity, and leave a very loose and confused impression on the hearers' minds.

In the second place, sermons are always the more striking, and commonly the more useful, the more precise and particular the subject of them is. This follows, in a great measure, from what I was just now illustrating. Though a general subject is capable of being conducted with a considerable degree of unity, yet that unity can never be so complete as in a particular one. The impression made must always be more undeterminate; and the instruction conveyed, will, commonly too, be less direct and convincing. General subjects, indeed, such as the excellency of the pleasures of religion, are often chosen by young preachers, as the most showy, and the easiest to be handled; and, doubtless, general views of religion are not to be neglected, as on several occasions they have great propriety. But these are not the subjects most favourable for producing the high effects of preaching. They fall in almost unavoidably with the beaten track of common-place thought. Attention is much more commanded by seizing some particular view of a great subject, some single interesting topic, and directing to that point the whole force of argument and eloquence. To recommend some one grace or virtue, or to inveigh against a particular vice, furnishes a subject not deficient in unity or precision; but if we confine ourselves to that virtue or vice as assuming a particular aspect, and consider it as it appears in certain characters, or affects certain situations in life, the subject becomes still more interesting. The execution is, I admit, more difficult, but the merit and the effect are higher.

In the third place, never study to say all that can be said upon a subject; no error is greater than this. Select the most useful, the most striking and persuasive topics which the text suggests, and rest the discourse upon these. If the doctrines which ministers of the gospel preach were altogether new to their hearers, it might be requisite for them to be exceedingly full on every particular, lest there should be any hazard of their not affording complete information. But it is much less for the sake of information than of persuasion, that discourses are delivered from the pulpit; and nothing is more opposite to persuasion, than an unnecessary and tedious fulness. There are always some things which the preacher may suppose to be known, and some things which he may only slightly touch. If he seek to omit nothing which his subject suggests, it will unavoidably happen that he will encumber it, and weaken its force.

In studying a sermon, he ought to place himself in the situation of a serious hearer. Let him suppose the subject addressed to himself: let him consider what views of it would strike him most; what arguments would be most likely to persuade him; what parts of it would dwell most upon his mind. Let these be employed as his principal materials; and in these it is most likely his genius

will exert itself with the greatest vigour. The spinning and wire-drawing mode, which is not uncommon among preachers, enervates the noblest truths. It may indeed be a consequence of observing the rule which I am now giving, that fewer sermons will be preached upon one text than is sometimes done; but this will, in my opinion, be attended with no disadvantage. I know no benefit that arises from introducing a whole system of religious truth under every text. The simplest and most natural method by far, is to choose that view of a subject to which the text principally leads, and to dwell no longer on the text, than is sufficient for discussing the subject in that view, which can commonly be done with sufficient profoundness and distinctness, in one or a few discourses: for it is a very false notion to imagine, that they always preach the most profoundly, or go the deepest into a subject, who dwell on it the longest. On the contrary, that tedious circuit, which some are ready to take in all their illustrations, is very frequently owing, either to their want of discernment for perceiving what is most important in the subject; or to their want of ability for placing it in the most proper point of view.

In the fourth place, study above all things to render your instructions interesting to the hearers. This is the great trial and mark of true genius for the eloquence of the pulpit: for nothing is so fatal to success in preaching, as a dry manner. A dry sermon can never be a good one. In order to preach in an interesting manner, much will depend upon the delivery of a discourse; for the manner in which a man speaks, is of the utmost consequence for affecting his audience; but much will also depend on the composition of thediscourse. Correct language, and elegant description, are but the secondary instruments of preaching in an interesting manner. The great secret lies, in bringing home all that is spoken to the hearts of the hearers, so as to make every man think that the preacher is addressing him in particular. For this end, let him avoid all intricate reasonings; avoid expressing himself in general speculative propositions, or laying down practical truths in an abstract metaphysical manner. As much as possible, the discourse ought to be carried on in the strain of direct address to the audience; not in the strain of one writing an essay, but of one speaking to a multitude, and studying to mix what is called application, or what has an immediate reference to practice, with the doctrinal and didactic parts of the sermon.

It will be of much advantage to keep always in view the different ages, characters, and conditions of men, and to accommodate directions and exhortations to these different classes of hearers. Whenever you bring forth what a man feels to touch his own character, or to suit his own circumstances, you are sure of interesting him. No study is more necessary for this purpose, than

the study of human life, and the human heart. To be able to unfold the heart, and to discover a man to himself, in a light in which he never saw his own character before, produces a wonderful effect. As long as a preacher hovers in a cloud of general observations, and descends not to trace the particular lines and features of manners, the audience are apt to think themselves unconcerned in the description. It is the striking accuracy of moral characters, that gives the chief power and effect to a preacher's discourse. Hence, examples founded on historical facts, and drawn from real life, of which kind the Scriptures afford many, always, when they are well chosen, command high attention. No favourable opportunity of introducing these should be omitted. They correct, in some degree, that disadvantage to which I before observed preaching is subject, of being confined to treat of qualities in the abstract, not of persons, and place the weight and reality of religious truths in the most convincing light. Perhaps the most beautiful, and among the most useful sermons of any, though, indeed, the most difficult in composition, are such as are wholly characteristical, or founded on the illustration of some peculiar character, or remarkable piece of history in the sacred writings; by pursuing which one can trace, and lay open, some of the most secret windings of man's heart. Other topics of preaching have been much beaten; but this is a field, which, wide in itself, has hitherto been little explored by the composers of sermons, and possesses all the advantages of being curious, new, and highly useful. Bishop Butler's sermon on the 'Character of Balaam,' will give an idea of that sort of preaching which I have in my eye.

In the fifth and last place, let me add a caution against taking the model of preaching from particular fashions that chance to have the vogue. These are torrents that swell to-day and will have spent themselves by to-morrow. Sometimes it is the taste of poetical preaching, sometimes of philosophical, that has the fashion on its side; at one time it must be all pathetic, at another time all argumentative, according as some celebrated preacher has set the example. Each of these modes, in the extreme, is very faulty; and he who conforms himself to any of them, will both cramp genius and corrupt it. It is the universal taste of mankind, which is subject to no such changing modes, that alone is entitled to possess any authority; and this will never give its sanction to any strain of preaching, but what is founded on human nature, connected with usefulness, adapted to the proper idea of a sermon, as a serious persuasive oration, delivered to a multitude, in order to make them better men. Let a preacher form himself upon this standard, and keep it close in his eye, and he will be in a much surer road to reputation, and success at last, than by a servile compliance with any popular taste, or transient humour of his hearers.

Truth and good sense are firm, and will establish themselves; mode and humour are feeble and fluctuating. Let him never follow, implicitly, any one example; or become a servile imitator of any preacher, however much admired. From various examples, he may pick up much for his improvement; some he may prefer to the rest; but the servility of imitation extinguishes all genius, or rather is a proof of the entire want of genius.

With respect to style, that which the pulpit requires, must certainly, in the first place, be very perspicuous. As discourses spoken there are calculated for the instruction of all sorts of hearers, plainness and simplicity should reign in them. All unusual, swoln, or high-sounding words, should be avoided; especially all words that are merely poetical, or merely philosophical. Young preachers are apt to be caught with the glare of these; and in young composers the error may be excusable; but they may be assured that it is an error, and proceeds from their not having yet acquired a correct taste. Dignity of expression, indeed, the pulpit requires in a high degree; nothing that is mean or groveling, no low or vulgar phrases, ought on any account to be admitted. But this dignity is perfectly consistent with simplicity. The words employed may be all plain words, easily understood, and in common use; and yet the style may be abundantly dignified, and, at the same time, very lively and animated, For a lively and animated style is extremely suited to the pulpit. The earnestness which a preacher ought to feel, and the grandeur and importance of his subjects, justify and often require warm and glowing expressions. He not only may employ metaphors and comparisons, but, on proper occasions, may apostrophise the saint or the sinner; may personify inanimate objects, break out into bold exclamations, and, in general, has the command of the most passionate figures of speech. But on this subject, of the proper use and management of figures, I have insisted so fully in former Lectures, that I have no occasion now to give particular directions; unless it be only to recall to mind that most capital rule, never to employ strong figures, or a pathetic style, except in cases where the subject leads to them, and where the speaker is impelled to the use of them by native unaffected warmth.

The language of sacred Scripture, properly employed, is a great ornament to sermons. It may be employed, either in the way of quotation or allusion. Direct quotations, brought from Scripture, in order to support what the preacher indicates, both give authority to his doctrine, and render his discourse more solemn and venerable. Allusions to remarkable passages, or expressions of Scripture, when introduced with propriety, have generally a pleasing effect. They afford the preacher a fund of metaphorical expression which no other composition enjoys, and by means of which he can vary and

enliven his style. But he must take care that all such allusions be natural and easy; for if they seem forced, they approach to the nature of conceits.*

In a sermon, no points or conceits should appear, no affected smartness and quaintness of expression. These derogate much from the dignity of the pulpit; and give to a preacher that air of foppishness, which he ought, above all things, to shun. It is rather a strong expressive style, than a sparkling one, that is to be studied. But we must beware of imagining that we render style strong or expressive, by a constant and multiplied use of epithets. This is a great error. Epithets have often great beauty and force. But if we introduce them into every sentence, and string many of them together to one object, in place of strengthening, we clog and enfeeble style; in place of illustrating the image, we render it confused and indistinct. He that tells me 'of this perishing, mutable, and transitory world;' by all these three epithets, does not give me so strong an idea of what he would convey, as if he had used one of them with propriety. I conclude this head with an advice, never to have what may be called a favourite expression; for it shews affectation, and becomes disgusting. Let not any expression, which is remarkable for its lustre or beauty, occur twice in the same discourse. The repetition of it betrays a fondness to shine, and, at the same time, carries the appearance of a barren invention.

As to the question, whether it be most proper to write sermons fully, and commit them accurately to memory, or to study only the matter and thoughts, and trust the expression, in part at least, to the delivery? I am of opinion, that no universal rule can here be given. The choice of either of these methods must be left to preachers, according to their different genius. The expressions which come warm and glowing from the mind, during the fervour of pronunciation, will often have a superior grace and energy, to

* Bishop Sherlock, when shewing, that the views of reason have been enlarged, and the principles of natural religion illustrated, by the discoveries of Christianity, attacks unbelievers for the abuse they make of these advantages, in the following manner: 'What a return do we make for those blessings we have received? How disrespectfully do we treat the gospel of Christ, to which we owe that clear light both of reason and nature, which we now enjoy, when we endeavour to set up reason and nature in opposition to it? Ought the *withered hand*, which Christ has restored and made whole to be lifted up against him?' Vol. 1. disc. i. This allusion to a noted miracle of our Lord's appears to me happy and elegant. Dr. Seed is remarkably fond of allusions to Scripture style; but he sometimes employs such as are too fanciful and strained. As when he says (Serm. iv.), 'No one great virtue will come single; the virtues *that be her fellows will bear her company with joy and gladness*:' alluding to a passage in the XLVth Psalm, which relates to the virgins, the companions of the king's daughter. And (Serm. xiii.) having said, that the universities have justly been called the eyes of the nation, he adds, 'and *if the eyes* of the nation *be evil, the whole body of it must be full of darkness*.'

those which are studied in the retirement of the closet. But then, this fluency and power of expression cannot, at all times, be depended upon, even by those of the readiest genius; and by many can at no time be commanded, when overawed by the presence of an audience. It is proper therefore to begin, at least, the practice of preaching, with writing as accurately as possible. This is absolutely necessary in the beginning, in order to acquire the power and habit of correct speaking, nay, also of correct thinking, upon religious subjects. I am inclined to go farther, and to say, that it is proper not only to begin thus but also to continue, as long as the habits of industry last, in the practice both of writing and committing to memory. Relaxation in this particular is so common, and so ready to grow upon most speakers in the pulpit, that there is little occasion for giving any cautions against the extreme of overdoing in accuracy.

Of pronunciation or delivery, I am hereafter to treat apart. All that I shall now say upon this head is, that the practice of reading sermons, is one of the greatest obstacles to the eloquence of the pulpit in Great Britain, where alone this practice prevails. No discourse, which is designed to be persuasive, can have the same force when read, as when spoken. The common people all feel this, and their prejudice against this practice is not without foundation in nature. What is gained hereby in point of correctness, is not equal, I apprehend, to what is lost in point of persuasion and force. They, whose memories are not able to retain the whole of a discourse, might aid themselves considerably by short notes lying before them, which would allow them to preserve, in a great measure, the freedom and ease of one who speaks.

The French and English writers of sermons proceed upon very different ideas of the eloquence of the pulpit; and seem indeed to have split it betwixt them. A French sermon is, for most part, a warm animated exhortation; an English one, is a piece of cool instructive reasoning. The French preachers address themselves chiefly to the imagination and the passions; the English, almost solely to the understanding. It is the union of these two kinds of composition, of the French earnestness and warmth, with the English accuracy and reason, that would form, according to my idea, the model of a perfect sermon. A French sermon would sound in our ears as a florid, and, often, as an enthusiastic, harangue. The censure which, in fact, the French critics pass on the English preachers is, that they are philosophers and logicians, but not orators.* The defects of most of the French sermons are these:

* 'Les Sermons sont suivant notre méthode, de vrais discours oratoires; et non pas, comme chez les Anglois, des discussions metaphysiques plus convenables à une Académie, qu'aux Assemblées populaires qui se forment dans nos temples, et qu'il s'agit d'instruire des devoirs du Chrétianisme, d'encourager, de consoler, d'edifier.' Rhétorique Françoise, par M. Crevier, tom. i. p. 134.

from a mode that prevails among them of taking their texts from the lesson of the day, the connexion of the text with the subject is often unnatural and forced;* their applications of Scripture are fanciful rather than instructive; their method is stiff and cramped, by their practice of dividing their subject always either into three, or two, main points; and their composition is in general too diffuse, and consists rather of a very few thoughts spread out, and highly wrought up, than of a rich variety of sentiments. Admitting, however, all these defects, it cannot be denied that their sermons are formed upon the idea of a persuasive popular oration; and therefore I am of opinion, they may be read with benefit.

Among the French Protestant divines, Saurin is the most distinguished: he is copious, eloquent, and devout, though too ostentatious in his manner. Among the Roman Catholics, the two most eminent are, Bourdaloue and Massillon. It is a subject of dispute among the French critics, to which of these the preference is due, and each of them has his partisans. To Bourdaloue, they attribute more solidity and close reasoning; to Massillon, a more pleasing and engaging manner. Bourdaloue is indeed a great reasoner, and inculcates his doctrines with much zeal, piety, and earnestness; but his style is verbose, he is disagreeably full of quotations from the fathers, and he wants imagination. Massillon has more grace, more sentiment, and, in my opinion, every way more genius. He discovers much knowledge both of the world and of the human heart; he is pathetic and persuasive; and upon the whole, is perhaps the most eloquent writer of sermons which modern times have produced.†

* One of Massillon's best sermons, that on the coldness and languor with which Christians perform the duties of religion, is preached from Luke, iv. 18: 'And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house; and Simon's wife's mother was taken ill with a great fever.'

† In order to give an idea of that kind of eloquence which is employed by the French preachers, I shall insert a passage from Massillon, which, in the Encylopédie, (Article, Eloquence,) is extolled by Voltaire, who was the author of that article, as a chef d'œuvre, equal to any thing of which either ancient or modern times can boast. The subject of the sermon is, the small number of those who shall be saved. The strain of the whole discourse is extremely serious and animated; but when the orator came to the passage which follows, Voltaire informs us, that the whole assembly were moved; that by a sort of involuntary motion, they started up from their seats, and that such murmurs of surprise and acclamations arose as disconcerted the speaker, though they increased the effect of his discourse.

'Je m'arrête à vous, mes frères, qui êtes ici assemblés. Je ne parle plus du reste des hommes; je vous regarde comme si vous étiez seuls sur la terre: voici la pensée qui m'occupe et qui m'épouvante. Je suppose que c'est ici votre derniere heure, et la fin de l'univers; que les cieux vont s'ouvrir sur vos tétes, Jesus Christ paroitre dans sa gloire au milieu de ce temple, et que vous n'y êtes assemblés que pour l'attendre, comme des criminels tremblans, à qui l'on va prononcer, ou un sentence de grace, ou un arrêt de mort eternelle. Car vous avez beau vous flater; vous mouriez tels que vous êtes aujourd'hui. Tous ces désirs de changement que vous amusent, vous amuseront jusqu'au lit de la mort: c'est l'expérience de tous les siècles. Tout ce que [illegible] lors en vous de nouveau, sera peut-être un compte plus grand que

During the period that preceded the restoration of King Charles II. the sermons of the English divines abounded with scholastic casuistical theology. They were full of minute divisions and subdivisions, and scraps of learning in the didactic part; but to these were joined very warm pathetic addresses to the consciences of the hearers, in the applicatory part of the sermon. Upon the Restoration, preaching assumed a more correct and polished form. It became disencumbered from the pedantry and scholastic divisions of the sectaries; but it threw out also their warm and pathetic addresses, and established itself wholly upon the model of cool reasoning, and rational instruction. As the dissenters from the church continued to preserve somewhat of the old strain of preaching, this led the established clergy to depart the farther from it. Whatever was earnest and passionate, either in the composition or delivery of sermons, was reckoned enthusiastic and fanatical; and hence that argumentative manner, bordering on the dry and unpersuasive, which is too generally the character of English sermons.

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celui que vous auriez aujourd'hui à rendre; et sur ce que vous seriez, si l'on venoit vous juger dans ce moment, vous pouvez presque decider ce que vous arrivera au sortir de la vie.

'Or, je vous le demande, et je vous le demande frappê de terreur, ne separant pas en ce point mon sort du votre, et me mettant dans la même disposition, où je souhait que vous entriez; je vous demande, donc, si Jesus Christ paroissoit dans se temple, au milieu de cette Assemblée; la plus auguste de l'univers, pour nous juger, pour faire le terrible discernement des boucs et des brebis, croyez vous que le plus grand nombre de tout ce que nous sommes ici, fut placé à la droite? Croyez vous que les choses du moins fussent egales? croyez vous qu'il s'y trouvât seulement dix justes, que le Seigneur ne pût trouver autrefois en cinq villes toutes entières? Je vous le demande; vous l'ignorez, et je l'ignore moi-même. Vous seul, O mon Dieu! connoissez que vous appartiennent.—Mes frères, notre perte est presque assurée, et nous n'y pensons pas. Quand même dans cette terrible séparation qui se fera un jour, il ne devroit y avoir qu'un seul pêcheur de cet Assemblée du côté des réprouvés, et qu'une voix du ciel viendroit nous en assurer dans ce Temple, sans le designer; qui de nous ne craindroit d'être le malheureux? qui de nous ne retomberoit d'abord, sur la conscience, pour examiner si ses crimes n'ont pas méritez ce châtiment? qui de nous, saisi de frayeur, ne demanderoit pas à Jesus Christ comme autrefois les Apôtres; Seigneur, ne seroit-ce pas moi? Sommes nous sages, mes chers Auditeurs? peut-être que parmi tous ceux qui m'entendent, il ne se trouvera pas dix justes; peut-être s'en trouvera-t-il encore moins. Que sai-je, O mon Dieu! je n'ôse regarder d'un œil fixe les abismes de vos jugemens, et de votre justice; peut-être ne s'en trouvera-t-il qu'un seul; et ce danger ne vous touche point, mon cher Auditeur? et vous croyez être ce seul heureux dans le grand nombre qui perira? vous qui avez moins sujet de le croire que tout autre; vous sur qui seul la sentence de mort devroit tomber. Grand Dieu! quel'on connoit peu dans le monde les terreurs de votre loi,' &c.——After this awakening and alarming exhortation, the orator comes with propriety to this practical improvement: 'Mais que conclure de ces grandes verités? qu'il faut desespérer de son salut? a Dieu ne plaise; il n'y a que l'impie, qui pour se calmer sur ses desordres, tâche ici de conclure en secret que tous les hommes périront comme lui; ce ne doit pas être là le fruit de ce discours. Mais de vous detromper de cette erreur si universelle, qu'on peut faire ce que tous les autres font; et que l'usage est une voie sure; mais de vous convaincre que pour se sauver, il faut se distinguer des autres; être singulier, vivre à part au milieu du monde, et ne pas ressembler à la foule.' Sermons de Massillon, vol. iv.

Nothing can be more correct upon that model than many of them are; but the model itself on which they are formed, is a confined and imperfect one. Dr. Clark, for instance, every where abounds in good sense, and the most clear and accurate reasoning; his applications of Scripture are pertinent; his style is always perspicuous, and often elegant; he instructs and he convinces; in what then is he deficient? In nothing, except in the power of interesting and seizing the heart. He shews you what you ought to do; but he excites not the desire of doing it: he treats man as if he were a being of pure intellect, without imagination or passions. Archbishop Tillotson's manner is more free and warm, and he approaches nearer than most of the English divines to the character of popular speaking. Hence he is, to this day, one of the best models we have for preaching. We must not indeed consider him in the light of a perfect orator: his composition is too loose and remiss; his style too feeble, and frequently too flat, to deserve that high character; but there is in some of his sermons so much warmth and earnestness, and through them all there runs so much ease and perspicuity, such a vein of good sense and sincere piety, as justly entitle him to be held as eminent a preacher as England has produced.

In Dr. Barrow, one admires more the prodigious fecundity of his invention, and the uncommon strength and force of his conceptions, than the felicity of his execution, or his talent in composition. We see a genius far surpassing the common, peculiar indeed almost to himself; but that genius often shooting wild, and unchastised by any discipline or study of eloquence.

I cannot attempt to give particular characters of that great number of writers of sermons which this and the former age have produced, among whom we meet with a variety of the most respectable names. We find in their composition much that deserves praise; a great display of abilities of different kinds, much good sense and piety, strong reasoning, sound divinity, and useful instruction; though, in general, the degree of eloquence bears not, perhaps, equal proportion to the goodness of the matter. Bishop Atterbury deserves to be particularly mentioned as a model of correct and beautiful style, besides having the merit of a warmer and more eloquent strain of writing, in some of his sermons, than is commonly met with. Had Bishop Butler, in place of abstract philosophical essays, given us more sermons in the strain of those two excellent ones which he has composed upon self-deceit, and upon the character of Balaam, we should then have pointed him out as distinguished for that species of characteristical sermons which I before recommended.

Though the writings of the English divines are very proper to be read by such as are designed for the church, I must caution them against making too much use of them, or transcribing large

passages from them into the sermons they compose. Such as once indulge themselves in this practice, will never have any fund of their own. Infinitely better it is, to venture into the pulpit with thoughts and expressions which have occurred to themselves, though of inferior beauty, than to disfigure their compositions by borrowed and ill-sorted ornaments, which, to a judicious eye, will be always in hazard of discovering their own poverty. When a preacher sits down to write on any subject, never let him begin with seeking to consult all who have written on the same text or subject. This, if he consult many, will throw perplexity and confusion into his ideas; and, if he consults only one, will often warp him insensibly into his method, whether it be right or not. But let him begin with pondering the subject in his own thoughts; let him endeavour to fetch materials from within; to collect and arrange his ideas; and form some sort of plan to himself; which it is always proper to put down in writing. Then, and not till then, he may inquire how others have treated the same subject. By this means, the method, and the leading thoughts in the sermon, are likely to be his own. These thoughts he may improve by comparing them with the track of sentiments which others have pursued; some of their sense he may, without blame, incorporate into his composition; retaining always his own words and style. This is fair assistance: all beyond is plagiarism.

On the whole, never let the capital principle, with which we set out at first, be forgotten, to keep close in view the great end for which a preacher mounts the pulpit; even to infuse good dispositions into his hearers, to persuade them to serve God, and to become better men. Let this always dwell on his mind when he is composing, and it will diffuse through his compositions that spirit which will render them at once esteemed and useful. The most useful preacher is always the best, and will not fail of being esteemed so. Embellish truth only with a view to gain it the more full and free admission into your hearers' minds; and your ornaments will, in that case, be simple, masculine, natural. The best applause, by far, which a preacher can receive, arises from the serious and deep impressions which his discourse leaves on those who hear it. The finest encomium, perhaps, ever bestowed on a preacher, was given by Louis XIV. to the eloquent Bishop of Clermont, father Massillon, whom I before mentioned with so much praise. After hearing him preach at Versailles, he said to him, 'Father, I have heard many great orators in this chapel; I have been highly pleased with them; but for you, whenever I hear you, I go away displeased with myself; for I see more of my own character.'

LECTURE XXX.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF A SERMON OF BISHOP ATTERBURY'S.

The last Lecture was employed in observations on the peculiar and distinguishing characters of the eloquence proper for the pulpit. But as rules and directions, when delivered in the abstract, are never so useful as when they are illustrated by particular instances, it may, perhaps, be of some benefit to those who are designed for the church, that I should analyze an English sermon, and consider the matter of it, together with the manner. For this purpose I have chosen Bishop Atterbury as my example, who is deservedly accounted one of our most eloquent writers of sermons, and whom I mentioned as such in the last Lecture. At the same time, he is more distinguished for elegance and purity of expression, than for profoundness of thought. His style, though sometimes careless, is, upon the whole, neat and chaste; and more beautiful than that of most writers of sermons. In his sentiments he is not only rational, but pious and devotional, which is a great excellency. The sermon which I have singled out, is that upon Praise and Thanksgiving, the first sermon of the first volume, which is reckoned one of his best. In examining it, it is necessary that I should use full liberty, and, together with the beauties, point out any defects that occur to me in the matter, as well as in the style.

Psalm l. 14. *Offer unto God thanksgiving.*

'Among the many excellences of this pious collection of hymns, for which so particular a value hath been set upon it by the church of God in all ages, this is not the least, that the true price of duties is there justly stated; men are called off from resting in the outward show of religion, in ceremonies and ritual observances; and taught, rather to practise (that which was shadowed out by these rites, and to which they are designed to lead) sound inward piety and virtue.

'The several composers of these hymns were *prophets;* persons, whose business it was not only to foretell events for the benefit of the church in succeeding times, but to correct and reform also what was amiss among that race of men with whom they lived and conversed; to preserve a foolish people from idolatry, and false worship; to rescue the law from corrupt glosses, and superstitious abuses; and to put men in mind of (what they are so willing to forget) that eternal and invariable rule, which was before these *positive* duties, would continue after them, and was to be observed, even then, in preference to them.

'The discharge, I say, of this part of the prophetic office taking up so much room in the book of Psalms; this hath been one rea-

son, among many others, why they have always been so highly esteemed; because we are from hence furnished with a proper reply to an argument commonly made use of by unbelievers, who look upon all revealed religions as pious frauds and impostures, on the account of the prejudices they have entertained in relation to that of the Jews; the whole of which they first suppose to lie in external performances, and then easily persuade themselves, that God could never be the author of such a mere piece of pageantry and empty formality; nor delight in a worship which consisted purely in a number of odd unaccountable ceremonies. Which objection of theirs, we should not be able thoroughly to answer, unless we could prove (chiefly out of the Psalms, and other parts of the prophetic writings) that the Jewish religion was somewhat more than bare outside and show; and that inward purity, and the devotion of the heart, was a duty then, as well as now.'

This appears to me an excellent introduction. The thought on which it rests is solid and judicious: that in the book of Psalms, the attention of men is called to the moral and spiritual part of religion; and the Jewish dispensation thereby vindicated from the suspicion of requiring nothing more from its votaries, than the observance of the external rites and ceremonies of the law. Such views of religion are proper to be often displayed; and deserve to be insisted on, by all who wish to render preaching conducive to the great purpose of promoting righteousness and virtue. The style, as far as we have gone, is not only free from faults, but elegant and happy.

It is a great beauty in an introduction, when it can be made to turn on some one thought, fully brought out and illustrated; especially, if that thought has a close connexion with the following discourse, and, at the same time, does not anticipate any thing that is afterward to be introduced in a more proper place. This introduction of Atterbury's has all these advantages. The encomium which he makes on the strain of David's Psalms is not such as might as well have been prefixed to any other discourse, the text of which was taken from any of the Psalms. Had this been the case, the introduction would have lost much of its beauty. We shall see from what follows how naturally the introductory thought connects with his text, and how happily it ushers it in.

'One great instance of this proof, we have in the words now before us: which are taken from a Psalm of Asaph, written on purpose to set out the weakness and worthlessness of external performances, when compared with more substantial and vital duties. To enforce which doctrine, God himself is brought in as delivering it. "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God." The preface is

very solemn, and therefore what it ushers in, we may be sure is of no common importance; "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me." That is, I will not so reprove thee for any failures in thy sacrifices and burnt-offerings, as if these were the only, or the chief things I required of thee. "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy folds;" I prescribed not sacrifices to thee for my own sake, because I needed them; "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills." Mine they are, and were, before I commanded thee to offer them to me; so that, as it follows, "If I were hungry, yet would I not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." But can ye be so gross and senseless, as to think me liable to hunger and thirst; as to imagine that wants of that kind can touch me? Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?—Thus doth he expostulate severely with them, after the most graceful manner of the Eastern poetry. The issue of which is a plain and full resolution of the case, in those few words of the text—"Offer unto God thanksgiving." Would you do your homage the most agreeable way? would you render the most acceptable of services? "offer unto God thanksgiving."

It is often a difficult matter to illustrate gracefully the text of a sermon from the context, and to point out the connexion between them. This is a part of the discourse which is apt to become dry and tedious, especially when pursued into a minute commentary. And therefore, except as far as such illustration from the context is necessary for explaining the meaning, or in cases where it serves to give dignity and force to the text, I would advise that it be always treated with brevity. Sometimes it may even be wholly omitted, and the text assumed merely as an independent proposition, if the connexion with the context be obscure, and would require a laborious explanation. In the present case, the illustration from the context is singularly happy. The passage of the Psalm on which it is founded is noble and spirited, and connected in such a manner with the text, as to introduce it with a very striking emphasis. On the language I have little to observe, except that the phrase, 'one great instance of this proof,' is a clumsy expression. It was sufficient to have said, 'one great proof, or one great instance of this.' In the same sentence, when he speaks of 'setting out the weakness and worthlessness of external performances,' we may observe, that the word 'worthlessness,' as it is now commonly used, signifies more than the deficiency of worth, which is all that the author means. It generally imports, a considerable degree of badness or blame. It would be more proper, therefore, to say, the 'imperfection,' or the 'insignificancy,' of external performances.

'The use I intend to make of these words, is, from hence to raise some thoughts about that very excellent and important duty of praise and thanksgiving, a subject not unfit to be discoursed of at this time; whether we consider, either the more than ordinary coldness that appears of late in men's tempers towards the practice of this (or any other) part of a warm and affecting devotion; the great occasion of setting aside this particular day in the calendar, some years ago; or the new instances of mercy and goodness, which God had lately been pleased to bestow upon us; answering at last the many prayers and fastings, by which we have besought him so long for the establishment of their majesties' throne, and for the success of their arms; and giving us in his good time, an opportunity of appearing before him in the more delightful part of our duty, "with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that keep holidays."'

In this paragraph there is nothing remarkable: no particular beauty or neatness of expression; and the sentence which it forms is long and tiresome.—'To raise some thoughts about that very excellent,' &c. is rather loose and awkward;—better—'to recommend that very excellent,' &c.; and when he mentions 'setting aside' a particular day in the calendar, one would imagine, that 'setting apart' would have been more proper, as to 'set aside,' seems rather to suggest a different idea.

'"Offer unto God thanksgiving."—Which that we may do, let us inquire first, how we are to *understand* this command of offering praise and thanksgiving unto God; and then how *reasonable* it is that we should comply with it.'

This is the general division of the discourse. An excellent one it is, and corresponds to many subjects of this kind, where particular duties are to be treated of; first to explain, and then to recommend or enforce them. A division should always be simple and natural; and much depends on the proper view which it gives of the subject.

'Our inquiry into what is meant here, will be very short; for who is there, that understands any thing of religion, but knows, that the offering praise and thanks to God, implies, our having a lively and devout sense of his excellences, and of his benefits; our recollecting them with humility and thankfulness of heart; and our expressing these inward affections by suitable outward signs, by reverent and lowly postures of body, by songs and hymns, and spiritual ejaculations; either publicly or privately; either in the customary and daily service of the church, or in its more solemn assemblies, convened upon extraordinary occasions? This is the account which every Christian easily gives himself of it; and which, therefore, it would be needless to enlarge upon. I shall only take notice upon this head, that praise and thanksgiving do,

in strictness of speech, signify things somewhat different. Our "praise" properly terminates in God, on account of his natural excellences and perfections; and is that act of devotion, by which we confess and admire his several attributes: but "thanksgiving" is a narrower duty, and imports only a grateful sense and acknowledgment of past mercies. We praise God for all his glorious acts of every kind, that regard either us or other men; for his very "vengeance," and those "judgments" which he sometimes sends "abroad in the earth;" but we thank him, properly speaking, for the instances of his goodness alone; and for such only of these as we ourselves are someway concerned in. This, I say, is what the two words strictly imply; but since the language of Scripture is generally less exact, and useth either of them often to express the other by, I shall not think myself obliged, in what follows, thus nicely always to distinguish them.'

There was room here for insisting more fully on the nature of the duty than the author has done under this head; in particular, this was the place for correcting the mistake, to which men are always prone, of making thanksgiving to consist merely in outward expressions; and for shewing them, that the essence of the duty lies in the inward feelings of the heart. In general, it is of much use to give full and distinct explications of religious duties. But, as our author intended only one discourse on the subject, he could not enlarge with equal fulness on every part of it; and he has chosen to dwell on that part on which indeed it is most necessary to enlarge, the motives enforcing the duty. For, as it is an easier matter to know, than to practise duty, the persuasive part of the discourse is that to which the speaker should always bend his chief strength. The account given in this head of the nature of praise and thanksgiving, though short, is yet comprehensive and distinct, and the language is smooth and elegant.

'Now the great reasonableness of this duty of praise or thanksgiving, and our several obligations to it, will appear, if we either consider it absolutely in itself, as the debt of our natures; or compare it with other duties, and shew the rank it bears among them; or set out, in the last place, some of its peculiar properties and advantages, with regard to the devout performer of it.'

The author here enters upon the main part of his subject, the reasonableness of the duty, and mentions three arguments for proving it. These are well stated, and are in themselves proper and weighty considerations. How far he has handled each of them to advantage, will appear as we proceed. I cannot, however, but think that he has omitted one very material part of the argument, which was to have shewn the obligations we are under to this duty, from the various subjects of thanksgiving afforded us by the divine goodness. This would have led him to review the chief benefits of

creation, providence, and redemption: and certainly, they are these which lay the foundation of the whole argument for thanksgiving. The heart must first be affected with a suitable sense of the divine benefits, before one can be excited to praise God. If you would persuade me to be thankful to a benefactor, you must not employ such considerations merely as those upon which the author here rests, taken from gratitude's being the law of my nature, or bearing a high rank among moral duties, or being attended with peculiar advantages. These are considerations but of a secondary nature. You must begin with setting before me all that my friend has done for me, if you mean to touch my heart, and to call forth the emotions of gratitude. The case is perfectly similar, when we are exhorted to give thanks to God; and therefore in giving a full view of the subject, the blessings conferred on us by divine goodness should have been taken into the argument.

It may be said, however, in apology for our author, that this would have led him into too wide a field for one discourse, and into a field also, which is difficult, because so beaten, the enumeration of the divine benefits. He, therefore, seems to take it for granted, that we have upon our minds a just sense of these benefits. He assumes them as known and acknowledged; and setting aside what may be called the pathetic part of the subject, or what was calculated to warm the heart, he goes on to the reasoning part. In this management, I cannot altogether blame him. I do not by any means say, that it is necessary in every discourse to take in all that belongs to the doctrine of which we treat. Many a discourse is spoiled, by attempting to render it too copious and comprehensive. The preacher may, without reprehension, take up any part of a great subject to which his genius at the time leads him, and make that his theme. But when he omits any thing which may be thought essential, he ought to give notice, that this is a part, which for the time he lays aside. Something of this sort would perhaps have been proper here. Our author might have begun by saying, that the reasonableness of this duty must appear to every thinking being, who reflects upon the infinite obligations which are laid upon us, by creating, preserving, and redeeming love; and, after taking notice that the field which these open, was too wide for him to enter upon at that time, have proceeded to his other heads. Let us now consider these separately.

'The duty of praise and thanksgiving, considered *absolutely* in itself, is, I say, the debt and law of our nature. We had such faculties bestowed on us by our Creator, as made us capable of satisfying this debt, and obeying this law; and they never, therefore, work more naturally and freely, than when they are thus employed.

''Tis one of the earliest instructions given us by philosophy,

and which hath ever since been approved and inculcated by the wisest men of all ages, that the original design of making man was, that he might praise and honour Him who made him. When God had finished this goodly frame of things we call "the world," and put together the several parts of it, according to his infinite wisdom, in exact number, weight, and measure, there was still wanting a creature, in these lower regions, that could apprehend the beauty, order, and exquisite contrivance of it; that from contemplating the gift, might be able to raise itself to the great Giver, and do honour to all his attributes. Every thing indeed that God made, did, in some sense, glorify its Author, inasmuch as it carried upon it the plain mark and impress of the Deity, and was an effect worthy of that first cause from whence it flowed; and thus might the "heavens" be said, at the first moment in which they stood forth, to "declare his glory, and the firmament to shew his handy-work." But this was an imperfect and defective glory; the sign was of no signification here below, whilst there was no one here as yet to take notice of it. Man, therefore, was formed to supply this want, endowed with powers fit to find out, and to acknowledge, these unlimited perfections; and then put into this temple of God, this lower world, as the priest of nature, to offer up the incense of thanks and praise for the mute and insensible part of the creation.

'This, I say, hath been the opinion all along of the most thoughtful men down from the most ancient times: and though it be not demonstrative, yet it is what we cannot but judge highly reasonable, if we do but allow, that man was made for some end or other; and that he is capable of perceiving that end. For, then, let us search and inquire never so much, we shall find no other account of him that we can rest upon so well. If we say, that he was made purely for the good pleasure of God; this is, in effect, to say, that he was made for no determinate end, or for none, at least, that we can discern. If we say that he was designed as an instance of the wisdom, and power, and goodness of God; this, indeed, may be the reason of his *being* in general; for 'tis the common reason of the being of every thing besides. But it gives no account, why he was made *such* a being as he is, a reflecting, thoughtful, inquisitive being. The particular reason of this seems most aptly to be drawn from the praise and honour that was (not only to redound to God from him, but) to be given to God by him.'

The thought which runs through all this passage, of man's being the priest of nature, and of his existence being calculated chiefly for this end, that he might offer up the praises of the mute part of the creation, is an ingenious thought, and well illustrated. It was a favourite idea among some of the ancient philosophers; and it is not the worse on that account, as it thereby appears to

have been a natural sentiment of the human mind. In composing a sermon, however, it might have been better to have introduced it as a sort of collateral argument, or an incidental illustration, than to have displayed it with so much pomp, and to have placed it in the front of the arguments for this duty. It does not seem to me, when placed in this station, to bear all the stress which the author lays upon it. When the divine goodness brought man into existence, we cannot well conceive that its chief purpose was, to form a being who might sing praises to his Maker. Prompted by infinite benevolence, the supreme Creator formed the human race, that they might rise to happiness, and to the enjoyment of himself, through a course of virtue, or proper action. The sentiment on which our author dwells, however beautiful, appears too loose and rhetorical, to be a principal head of discourse.

This duty, therefore, is the debt and law of our nature. And it will more distinctly appear to be such, if we consider the two ruling faculties of our mind, the *understanding* and the *will* apart, in both which it is deeply founded: in the understanding, as in the principle of reason, which owns and acknowledges it; in the will, as in the fountain of gratitude and return, which prompts, and even constrains us to pay it.

'*Reason* was given us as a rule and measure, by the help of which we were to proportion our esteem of every thing, according to the degrees of perfection and goodness which we found therein. It cannot, therefore, if it doth its office at all, but apprehend God as the best and most perfect being; it must needs see and own and admire his infinite perfections. And this is what is strictly meant by *praise;* which, therefore, is expressed in Scripture, by *confessing* to *God,* and *acknowledging* him; by *ascribing* to him what is his due; and as far as this sense of the word reaches, 'tis impossible to *think* of God without praising him: for it depends not on the understanding, how it shall apprehend things, any more than it doth on the eye, how visible objects shall appear to it.

'The duty takes the farther and surer hold of us, by the means of the will, and that strong bent towards gratitude, which the Author of our nature hath implanted in it. There is not a more active principle than this in the mind of man; and surely that which deserves its utmost force, and should set all its springs a-work, is God; the great and universal Benefactor, from whom alone we receive whatever we either have, or are, and to whom we can possibly repay nothing but our praises, or (to speak more properly on this head, and according to the strict import of the word) our thanksgiving. "Who hath first given to God" (saith the great apostle in his usual figure) "and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" A gift, it seems, always requires a recompence: nay, "but of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:" *of him,* as

the Author; *through him*, as the Preserver and Governor; *to him*, as the end and perfection of all things: *to whom therefore* (as it follows), be glory for ever, Amen!'

I cannot much approve of the light in which our Author places his argument in these paragraphs. There is something too metaphysical and refined, in his deducing, in this manner, the obligation to thanksgiving, from the two faculties of the mind, understanding and will. Though what he says be in itself just, yet the argument is not sufficiently plain and striking. Arguments in sermons, especially on subjects that so naturally and easily suggest them, should be palpable and popular; should not be brought from topics that appear far sought, but should directly address the heart and feelings. The preacher ought never to depart too far from the common ways of thinking, and expressing himself. I am inclined to think, that this whole head might have been improved, if the author had taken up more obvious ground; had stated gratitude as one of the most natural principles in the human heart; had illustrated this, by shewing how odious the opposite disposition is, and with what general consent men, in all ages, have agreed in hating and condemning the ungrateful; and then, applying these reasonings to the present case, had placed in a strong view, that entire corruption of moral sentiment which it discovers, to be destitute of thankful emotions towards the supreme Benefactor of mankind. As the most natural method of giving vent to grateful sentiments is, by external expressions of thanksgiving, he might then have answered the objection that is apt to occur, of the expression of our praise being insignificant to the Almighty. But, by seeking to be too refined in his argument, he has omitted some of the most striking and obvious considerations, and which, properly displayed, would have afforded as great a field for eloquence, as the topics which he has chosen. He goes on.

'Gratitude consists in an equal return of benefits, if we are able; of thanks, if we are not: which thanks, therefore, must rise always in proportion as the favours received are great, and the receiver incapable of making any other sort of requital. Now, since no man hath benefited God at any time, and yet every man, in each moment of his life, is continually benefited by him, what strong obligations must we needs be under to thank him? 'Tis true, our thanks are really as insignificant to him, as any other kind of return would be; in themselves, indeed, they are worthless; but his goodness hath put a value upon them: he hath declared, he will accept them in lieu of the vast debt we owe; and after that, which is fittest for us, to dispute how they came to be taken as an *equivalent*, or to pay them?

'It is, therefore, the voice of nature (as far as gratitude itself is so), that the good things we receive from above should be sent

back again thither in thanks and praises; "as the rivers run into the sea, to the place" (the ocean of beneficence) "from whence the rivers come, thither" should "they return again."'

In these paragraphs, he has, indeed, touched some of the considerations which I mentioned. But he has only touched them; whereas, with advantage, they might have formed the main body of his argument.

'We have considered the duty *absolutely;* we are now to *compare* it with others, and to see what rank it bears among them. And here we shall find, that, among all the acts of religion immediately addressed to God, this is much the noblest and most excellent; as it must needs be, if what hath been laid down be allowed, that the end of man's creation was to praise and glorify God. For that cannot but be the most noble and excellent act of any being, which best answers the end and design of it. Other parts of devotion, such as *confession* and *prayer,* seem not originally to have been designed for man, nor man for them. They apply *guilt* and *want,* with which the *state of innocence* was not acquainted. Had man continued in that estate, his worship (like the devotions of angels) had been paid to heaven in pure acts of thanksgiving; and nothing had been left for him to do, beyond the enjoying the good things of life, as nature directed, and praising the God of nature who bestowed them. But being fallen from innocence and abundance; having contracted guilt, and forfeited his right to all sorts of mercies; prayer and confession became necessary, for a time, to retrieve the loss, and to restore him to that state wherein he should be able to live without them. These are fitted, therefore, for a lower dispensation; before which, in paradise, there was nothing but praise, and after which, there shall be nothing but that in heaven. Our perfect state did at first, and will at last, consist in the performance of this duty; and herein, therefore, lies the excellence and the honour of our nature.

''Tis the same way of reasoning, by which the apostle hath given the preference to charity, beyond faith, and hope, and every spiritual gift. "Charity never faileth," saith he; meaning that it is not a virtue useful only in this life; but will accompany us also into the next: "but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." These are gifts of a temporary advantage, and shall all perish in the using. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;" our present state is imperfect, and therefore what belongs to that, and only that, must be imperfect too. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." The argument of St. Paul, we see, which sets charity above the rest of Christian graces, will give praise also the pre-eminence over all the parts of Christian

worship; and we may conclude our reasoning, therefore, as he doth his; "And now abideth confession, prayer, and praise, these three; but the greatest of these is praise."'

The author here enters on the second part of his argument, the high rank which thanksgiving holds, when compared with other duties of religion. This he handles with much eloquence and beauty. His idea, that this was the original worship of man before his fall rendered other duties requisite, and shall continue to be his worship in heaven, when the duties which are occasioned by a consciousness of guilt shall have no place, is solid and just; his illustration of it is very happy; and the style extremely flowing and sweet. Seldom do we meet with any piece of composition in sermons, that has more merit than this head.

'It is so, certainly, on other accounts, as well as this; particularly, as it is the most *disinterested* branch of our religious service; such as hath the most of God, and the least of ourselves in it, of any we pay; and therefore approaches the nearest of any to a pure, and free, and perfect act of homage. For though a good action doth not grow immediately worthless by being done with the prospect of advantage, as some have strangely imagined; yet it will be allowed, I suppose, that its being done, without the mixture of that end, or with as little of it as possible, recommends it so much the more, and raises the price of it. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" was an objection of Satan; which implied, that those duties were most valuable, where our own interest was least aimed at: and God seems, by the commission he then gave Satan, to try experiments upon Job, thus far to have allowed his plea. Now, our requests for future, and even our acknowledgments of past mercies, centre purely in ourselves; our own interest is the direct aim of them. But praise is a generous and unmercenary principle, which proposes no other end to itself, but to do, as is fit for a creature endowed with such faculties to do, towards the most perfect and beneficent of beings; and to pay the willing tribute of honour there, where the voice of reason directs us to pay it. God hath, indeed, annexed a blessing to the duty; and when we know this, we cannot choose, while we are performing the duty, but have some regard to the blessing which belongs to it. However, that is not the direct aim of our devotions, nor was it the first motive that stirred us up to them. Had it been so, we should naturally have betaken ourselves to prayer, and breathed out our desires in that form wherein they are most properly conveyed.

'In short, praise is our most excellent work, a work common to the church triumphant and militant, and which lifts us up into communion and fellowship with angels. The matter about which it is conversant, is always the perfection of God's nature; and the act itself, is the perfection of ours.'

Our author's second illustration, is taken from praise being the most disinterested act of homage. This he explains justly and elegantly; though, perhaps, the consideration is rather too thin and refined for enforcing religious duties: as creatures, such as we, in approaching to the divine presence, can never be supposed to lay aside all consideration of our own wants and necessities; and certainly are not required (as the author admits) to divest ourselves of such regards. The concluding sentence of this head is elegant and happily expressed.

'I come now in the last place, to set out some of its peculiar *properties and advantages*, which recommend it to the devout performer. And,

'1. It is the most *pleasing* part of our devotions: it proceeds always from a lively cheerful temper of mind, and it cherishes and improves what it proceeds from. "For it is good to sing praises unto our God" (says one whose experience, in this case, we may rely upon), "for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." Petition and confession are the language of the indigent and the guilty, the breathings of a sad and contrite spirit: "Is any afflicted? let him pray;" but, "Is any merry; let him sing psalms." The most usual and natural way of men's expressing the mirth of their hearts is in a song, and songs are the very language of praise; to the expressing of which they are in a peculiar manner appropriated, and are scarce of any other use in religion. Indeed, the whole composition of this duty is such as throughout speaks ease and delight to the mind. It proceeds from *love*, and from *thankfulness;* from *love*, the fountain of pleasure, the passion which gives every thing we do, or enjoy, its relish and agreeableness. From *thankfulness*, which involves in it the memory of past benefits, the actual presence of them to the mind, and the repeated enjoyment of them. And as is its principle, such is its end also: for it procureth quiet and ease to the mind, by doing somewhat towards satisfying that debt which it labours under; by delivering it of those thoughts of praise and gratitude, those exultations it is so full of; and which would grow uneasy and troublesome to it, if they were kept in. If the thankful "refrained, it would be pain and grief" to them; but then, then "is their soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when their mouth praiseth God with joyful lips." '

In beginning this head of discourse, the expression which the author uses, to 'set out some of its peculiar properties and advantages,' would now be reckoned not so proper an expression, as 'to point out,' or 'to shew.' The first subdivision concerning praise being the most pleasant part of devotion, is very just and well expressed, as far as it goes; but seems to me rather defective. Much more might have been said, upon the pleasure that accom-

panies such exalted acts of devotion. It was a cold thought, to dwell upon its disburdening the mind of a debt. The author should have insisted more upon the influence of praise and thanksgiving, in warming, gladdening, soothing the mind; lifting it above the world, to dwell among divine and eternal objects. He should have described the peace and joy which then expand the heart; the relief which this exercise procures from the cares and agitations of life; the encouraging views of Providence to which it leads our attention; and the trust which it promotes in the divine mercy for the future, by the commemoration of benefits past. In short, this was the place for his pouring out a greater flow of devotional sentiments than what we here find.

'2. It is another distinguishing property of divine praise, that it enlargeth the powers and capacities of our souls, turning them from low and little things, upon their greatest and noblest object, the divine nature, and employing them in the discovery and admiration of those several perfections that adorn it. We see what difference there is between man and man, such as there is hardly greater between man and beast: and this proceeds chiefly from the different sphere of thought which they act in, and the different objects they converse with. The mind is essentially the same in the peasant and the prince; the force of it naturally equal, in the untaught man, and the philosopher; only the one of these is busied in mean affairs, and within narrower bounds; the other exercises himself in things of weight and moment; and this it is, that puts the wide distance between them. Noble objects are to the mind, what the sun-beams are to a bud or flower; they open and unfold, as it were, the leaves of it; put it upon exerting and spreading itself every way; and call forth all those powers that lie hid and locked up in it. The praise and admiration of God, therefore, brings this advantage along with it, that it sets our faculties upon their full stretch, and improves them to all the degrees of perfection of which they are capable.'

This head is just, well expressed, and to censure it might appear hypercritical. Some of the expressions, however, one would think, might be amended. The simile, for instance, about the effects of the sun-beams upon the bud or flower, is pretty, but not correctly expressed. 'They open and unfold, as it were, the leaves of it.' If this is to be literally applied to the flower, the phrase, 'as it were,' is needless; if it is to be metaphorically understood (which appears to be the case), the 'leaves of the mind,' is harsh language; besides that, 'put it upon exerting itself,' is rather a low expression. Nothing is more nice, than to manage properly such similes and allusions, so as to preserve them perfectly correct, and at the same time to render the image lively: it might perhaps be amended in some such way as this: 'As the sun-beams open

the bud, and unfold the leaves of a flower, noble objects have a like effect upon the mind: they expand and spread it, and call forth those powers that before lay hid and locked up in the soul.'

'3. It farther promotes in us an exquisite sense of God's honour, and a high indignation of mind at every thing that openly profanes it. For what we value and delight in, we cannot with patience hear slighted or abused. Our own praises, which we are constantly putting up, will be a *spur* to us towards procuring and promoting the divine glory in every other instance; and will make us set our faces against all open and avowed impieties; which, methinks, should be considered a little by such as would be thought not to be wanting in this duty, and yet are often silent under the foulest dishonours done to religion, and its great Author: for tamely to hear God's name and worship vilified by others, is no very good argument that we have been used to honour and reverence him, in good earnest, ourselves.'

The thought here is well founded, though it is carelessly and loosely brought out. The sentence, 'our own praises, which we are constantly putting up, will be a spur to us towards procuring and promoting the divine glory in every other instance,' is both negligent in language, and ambiguous in meaning; for 'our own praises,' properly signifies the praises of ourselves. Much better if he had said, 'Those devout praises, which we constantly offer up to the Almighty, will naturally prompt us to promote the divine glory in every other instance.'

'4. It will, beyond all this, work in us a deep humility and consciousness of our own imperfections. Upon a frequent attention to God and his attributes, we shall easily discover our own weakness and emptiness; our swelling thoughts of ourselves will abate, and we shall see and feel that we are 'altogether lighter to be laid in the balance than vanity;' and this is a lesson which, to the greatest part of mankind, is, I think, very well worth learning. We are naturally presumptuous and vain; full of ourselves, and regardless of every thing besides, especially when some little outward privileges distinguish us from the rest of mankind; then, 'tis odds, but we look into ourselves with great degrees of complacency, "and are wiser" (and better every way) "in our own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason." Now nothing will contribute so much to the cure of this vanity, as a due attention to God's excellences and perfections. By comparing these with those which we imagine belong to us, we shall learn, 'not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think of ourselves, but "to think soberly;" we shall find more satisfaction in looking upwards, and humbling ourselves before our common Creator, than in casting our eyes downwards with scorn upon our fellow-creatures, and setting at nought any part of the work of his hands. The

vast distance we are at from real and infinite worth, will astonish us so much, that we shall not be tempted to value ourselves upon these lesser degrees of pre-eminence, which custom or opinion, or some little accidental advantages, have given us over other men.'

Though the thought here also be just, yet a like deficiency in elegance and beauty appears. The phrase, ''tis odds but we look nto ourselves with great degrees of complacency,' is much too low and colloquial for a sermon—he might have said, 'we are likely,' or 'we are prone' to look into ourselves.—'Comparing these with those which we imagine belong to us,' is also very careless style. —'By comparing these with the virtues and abilities which we ascribe to ourselves, we shall learn'—would have been purer and more correct.'

'5. I shall mention but one use of it more, and 'tis this; that a conscientious praise of God will keep us back from all false and mean praise, all fulsome and servile flatteries, such as are in use among men. Praising, as 'tis commonly managed, is nothing else but a trial of skill upon a man, how many good things we can possibly say of him. All the treasures of oratory are ransacked, and all the fine things that ever were said, are heaped together for his sake; and no matter whether it belongs to him or not; so there be but enough on't. Which is one deplorable instance, among a thousand, of the baseness of human nature, of its small regard to truth and justice; to right or wrong; to what is, or is not to be praised. But he who hath a deep sense of the excellences of God upon his heart, will make a god of nothing besides. He will give every one his just encomium, honour where honour is due, and as much as is due, because it is his duty to do so; but the honour of God will suffer him to go no farther. Which rule, if it had been observed, a neighbouring prince (which now, God be thanked, needs flattery a great deal more than ever he did) would have wanted a great deal of that incense which hath been offered up to him by his adorers.'

This head appears scarcely to deserve any place among the more important topics that naturally presented themselves on this subject; at least, it had much better have wanted the application which the author makes of his reasoning to the flatterers of Louis XIV.; and the thanks which he offers to God, for the affairs of that prince being in so low a state, that he now needed flattery more than ever. This political satire is altogether out of place, and unworthy of the subject.

One would be inclined to think, upon reviewing our author's arguments, that he has overlooked some topics, respecting the happy consequences of this duty, of fully as much importance as any that he has inserted. Particularly, he ought not to have omitted the happy tendency of praise and thanksgiving, to

strengthen good dispositions in the heart; to promote love to God, and imitation of those perfections which we adore; and to infuse a spirit of ardour and zeal into the whole of religion, as the service of our benefactor. These are consequences which naturally follow from the proper performance of this duty; and which ought not to have been omitted; as no opportunity should be lost, of shewing the good effect of devotion on practical religion and moral virtue; and pointing out the necessary connexion of the one with the other. For certainly the great end of preaching is, to make men better in all the relations of life, and to promote that complete reformation of heart and conduct, in which true Christianity consists. Our author, however, upon the whole, is not deficient in such views of religion; for, in his general strain of preaching, as he is extremely pious, so he is, at the same time, practical and moral.

His summing up of the whole argument, in the next paragraph, is elegant and beautiful; and such concluding views of the subject are frequently very proper and useful: 'Upon these grounds doth the duty of praise stand, and these are the obligations that bind us to the performance of it. 'Tis the end of our being, and the very rule and law of our nature; flowing from the two great fountains of human action, the understanding and the will, naturally, and almost necessarily. It is the most excellent part of our religious worship; enduring to eternity, after the rest shall be *done away;* and paid, even now, in the frankest manner, with the least regard to our own interest. It recommends itself to us by several peculiar properties and advantages; as it carries more pleasure in it, than all other kinds of devotion; as it enlarges and exalts the several powers of the mind; as it breeds in us an exquisite sense of God's honour, and a willingness to promote it in the world; as it teaches us to be humble and lowly ourselves, and yet preserves us from base and sordid flattery, from bestowing mean and undue praises upon others.'

After this, our author addresses himself to two classes of men, the careless and the profane. His address to the careless is beautiful and pathetic; that to the profane is not so well executed, and is liable to some objection. Such addresses appear to me to be, on several occasions, very useful parts of a discourse. They prevailed much in the strain of preaching before the Restoration; and, perhaps, since that period, have been too much neglected. They afford an opportunity of bringing home to the consciences of the audience, many things, which, in the course of the sermon, were perhaps delivered in the abstract.

I shall not dwell on the conclusion of the sermon; which is chiefly employed in observations on the posture of public affairs at that time. Considered upon the whole, this discourse of Bishop

Atterbury's is both useful and beautiful, though I have ventured to point out some defects in it. Seldom, or never, can we expect to meet with a composition of any kind, which is absolutely perfect in all its parts: and when we take into account the difficulties which I before shewed to attend the eloquence of the pulpit, we have, perhaps, less reason to look for perfection in a sermon, than in any other composition.

LECTURE XXXI.

CONDUCT OF A DISCOURSE IN ALL ITS PARTS—INTRODUCTION—DIVISION—NARRATION AND EXPLICATION.

I HAVE, in the four preceding Lectures, considered what is peculiar to each of the three great fields of public speaking, popular assemblies, the bar, and the pulpit. I am now to treat of what is common to them all; of the conduct of a discourse or oration, in general. The previous view which I have given of the distinguishing spirit and character of different kinds of public speaking, was necessary for the proper application of the rules which I am about to deliver; and as I proceed, I shall farther point out, how far any of these rules may have a particular respect to the bar, to the pulpit, or to popular courts.

On whatever subject any one intends to discourse, he will most commonly begin with some introduction, in order to prepare the minds of his hearers; he will then state his subject, and explain the facts connected with it; he will employ arguments for establishing his own opinion, and overthrowing that of his antagonist: he may, perhaps, if there be room for it, endeavour to touch the passions of his audience; and after having said all he thinks proper, he will bring his discourse to a close, by some peroration or conclusion. This being the natural train of speaking, the parts that compose a regular formal oration, are these six; first, the exordium, or introduction; secondly, the state, and the division of the subject; thirdly, narration or explication; fourthly, the reasoning or arguments; fifthly, the pathetic part; and lastly, the conclusion. I do not mean, that each of these must enter into every public discourse, or that they must enter always in this order. There is no reason for being so formal on every occasion; nay, it would often be a fault, and would render a discourse pedantic and stiff. There may be many excellent discourses in public, where several of these parts are altogether wanting; where the speaker, for instance, uses no introduction, but enters directly on his subject; where he has no occasion either to divide or explain; but simply reasons on one

side of the question, and then finishes. But as the parts, which I have mentioned, are the natural constituent parts of a regular oration; and as in every discourse whatever, some of them must be found, it is necessary to our present purpose, that I should treat of each of them distinctly.

I begin, of course, with the exordium or introduction. This is manifestly common to all the three kinds of public speaking. It is not a rhetorical invention. It is founded upon nature, and suggested by common sense. When one is going to counsel another; when he takes upon him to instruct, or to reprove, prudence will generally direct him not to do it abruptly, but to use some preparation; to begin with somewhat that may incline the persons, to whom he addresses himself, to judge favourably of what he is about to say; and may dispose them to such a train of thought, as will forward and assist the purpose which he has in view. This is, or ought to be, the main scope of an introduction. Accordingly Cicero and Quinctilian mention three ends, to one or other of which it should be subservient, 'Reddere auditores benevolos, attentos, dociles.'

First, To conciliate the good-will of the hearers; to render them benevolent, or well affected to the speaker and to the subject. Topics for this purpose may, in causes at the bar, be sometimes taken from the particular situation of the speaker himself, or of his client, or from the character or behaviour of his antagonists contrasted with his own; on other occasions, from the nature of the subject, as closely connected with the interest of the hearers; and, in general, from the modesty and good intention with which the speaker enters upon his subject. The second end of an introduction, is, to raise the attention of the hearers; which may be effected, by giving them some hints of the importance, dignity, or novelty of the subject; or some favourable view of the clearness and precision with which we are to treat it; and of the brevity with which we are to discourse. The third end is to render the hearers docile, or open to persuasion; for which end we must begin with studying to remove any particular prepossessions they may have contracted against the cause, or side of the argument, which we espouse.

Some one of these ends should be proposed by every introduction. When there is no occasion for aiming at any of them; when we are already secure of the good-will, the attention, and the docility of the audience, as may often be the case, formal introductions may, without any prejudice, be omitted. And, indeed, when they serve for no purpose but mere ostentation, they had for the most part better be omitted; unless as far as respect to the audience makes it decent, that a speaker should not break in upon them too abruptly, but by a short exordium prepare them for what he is

going to say. Demosthenes's introductions are always short and simple; Cicero's are fuller and more artful.

The ancient critics distinguish two kinds of introductions, which they call 'Principium,' and 'Insinuatio.' 'Principium' is, where the orator plainly and directly professes his aim in speaking. 'Insinuatio' is, where a larger compass must be taken; and where, presuming the disposition of the audience to be much against the orator, he must gradually reconcile them to hearing him, before he plainly discovers the point which he has in view.

Of this latter sort of introduction, we have an admirable instance in Cicero's second oration against Rullus. This Rullus was tribune of the people, and had proposed an Agrarian law; the purpose of which was to create a Decemvirate, or ten commissioners, with absolute power for five years over all the lands conquered by the republic, in order to divide them among the citizens. Such laws had often been proposed by factious magistrates, and were always greedily received by the people. Cicero is speaking to the people; he had lately been made consul by their interest; and his first attempt is to make them reject this law. The subject was extremely delicate, and required much art. He begins with acknowledging all the favours which he had received from the people, in preference to the nobility. He professes himself the creature of their power, and of all men the most engaged to promote their interest. He declares, that he held himself to be the consul of the people; and that he would always glory in preserving the character of a popular magistrate. But to be popular, he observes, is an ambiguous word. He understood it to import, a steady attachment to the real interest of the people, to their liberty, their ease, and their peace; but by some, he saw, it was abused, and made a cover to their own selfish and ambitious designs. In this manner, he begins to draw gradually nearer to his purpose of attacking the proposal of Rullus, but still with great management and reserve. He protests, that he is far from being an enemy to Agrarian laws; he gives the highest praises to the Gracchi, those zealous patrons of the people; and assures them, that when he first heard of Rullus's law, he had resolved to support it, if he found it for their interest; but that, upon examining it, he found it calculated to establish a dominion that was inconsistent with liberty, and to aggrandize a few men at the expense of the public; and then terminates his exordium, with telling them, that he is going to give his reasons for being of this opinion: but that if his reasons shall not satisfy them, he will give up his own opinion, and embrace theirs. In all this, there was great art. His eloquence produced the intended effect; and the people, with one voice, rejected this Agrarian law.

Having given these general views of the nature and end of an

introduction, I proceed to lay down some rules for the proper composition of it. These are the more necessary, as this is a part of the discourse which requires no small care. It is always of importance to begin well; to make a favourable impression at first setting out; when the minds of the hearers, vacant as yet and free, are most disposed to receive any impression easily. I must add, too, that a good introduction is often found to be extremely difficult. Few parts of the discourse give the composer more trouble, or are attended with more nicety in the execution.

The first rule is, That the introduction should be easy and natural. The subject must always suggest it. It must appear, as Cicero beautifully expresses it, 'Effloruisse penitus ex re de quâ tum agitur.'* It is too common a fault in introductions, that they are taken from some common-place topic, which has no peculiar relation to the subject in hand; by which means they stand apart, like pieces detached from the rest of the discourse. Of this kind are Sallust's introductions, prefixed to his Catilinarian and Jugurthine wars. They might as well have been introductions to any other history, or to any other treatise whatever; and, therefore, though elegant in themselves, they must be considered as blemishes in the work, from want of due connexion with it. Cicero, though abundantly correct in this particular in his orations, yet is not so in his other works. It appears from a letter of his to Atticus, (L. xvi. 6.) that it was his custom to prepare, at his leisure, a collection of different introductions or prefaces, ready to be prefixed to any work that he might afterward publish. In consequence of this strange method of composing, it happened to him, to employ the same introduction twice without remembering it; prefixing it to two different works. Upon Atticus informing him of this, he acknowledges the mistake, and sends him a new introduction.

In order to render introductions natural and easy, it is, in my opinion, a good rule, that they should not be planned, till after one has meditated in his own mind the substance of his discourse. Then, and not till then, he should begin to think of some proper and natural introduction. By taking a contrary course, and labouring in the first place on an introduction, every one who is accustomed to composition will often find, that either he is led to lay hold of some common-place topic, or that, instead of the introduction being accommodated to the discourse, he is obliged to accommodate the whole discourse to the introduction which he had previously written. Cicero makes this remark; though, as we have seen, his practice was not always conformable to his own rule. 'Omnibus rebus consideratis, tum denique id quod primum est

* To have sprung up, of its own accord, from the matter which is under consideration.'

dicendum, postremum soleo cogitare, quo utar exordio. Nam si quando id primum invenire volui, nullum mihi occurrit, nisi aut exile, aut nugatorium, aut vulgare.'* After the mind has been once warmed and put in train, by close meditation on the subject, materials for the preface will then suggest themselves much more readily.

In the second place, In an introduction, correctness should be carefully studied in the expression. This is requisite, on account of the situation of the hearers. They are then more disposed to criticise than at any other period; they are, as yet, unoccupied with the subject or the arguments; their attention is wholly directed to the speaker's style and manner. Something must be done, therefore, to prepossess them in his favour; though, for the same reasons, too much art must be avoided; for it will be more easily detected at that time than afterward; and will derogate from persuasion in all that follows. A correct plainness, and elegant simplicity, is the proper character of an introduction; 'ut videamur,' says Quinctilian, 'accuratè non callidè dicere.'

In the third place, Modesty is another character which it must carry. All appearances of modesty are favourable, and prepossessing. If the orator set out with an air of arrogance and ostentation, the self-love and pride of the hearers will be presently awakened, and will follow him with a very suspicious eye throughout all his progress. His modesty should discover itself not only in his expressions at the beginning, but in his whole manner; in his looks, in his gestures, in the tone of his voice. Every auditory take in good part those marks of respect and awe, which are paid to them by one who addresses them. Indeed, the modesty of an introduction should never betray any thing mean or abject. It is always of great use to an orator, that together with modesty and deference to his hearers, he should shew a certain sense of dignity, arising from a persuasion of the justice or importance of the subject on which he is to speak.

The modesty of an introduction requires, that it promise not too much. 'Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem.'† This certainly is the general rule, that an orator should not put forth all his strength at the beginning, but should rise and grow upon us, as his discourse advances. There are cases, however, in which it

* 'When I have planned and digested all the materials of my discourse, it is my custom to think, in the last place, of the introduction with which I am to begin. For if at any time I have endeavoured to invent an introduction first, nothing has ever occurred to me for that purpose, but what was trifling, nugatory, and vulgar.'

† He does not lavish at a blaze his fire,
Sudden to glare, and then in smoke expire;
But rises from a cloud of smoke to light,
And pours his specious miracles to sight.
HOR. Ars Poet. FRANCIS.

is allowable for him to set out from the first in a high and bold tone; as for instance, when he rises to defend some cause which has been much run down, and decried by the public. Too modest a beginning might be then like a confession of guilt. By the boldness and strength of his exordium, he must endeavour to stem the tide that is against him, and to remove prejudices, by encountering them without fear. In subjects too of a declamatory nature, and in sermons, where the subject is striking, a magnificent introduction has sometimes a good effect, if it be properly supported in the sequel. Thus Bishop Atterbury, in beginning an eloquent sermon, preached on the 30th of January, the anniversary of what is called King Charles's Martyrdom, sets out in this pompous manner: 'This is a day of trouble, of rebuke, and of blasphemy; distinguished in the calendar of our church, and the annals of our nation, by the sufferings of an excellent prince, who fell a sacrifice to the rage of his rebellious subjects; and by his fall, derived infamy, misery, and guilt on them, and their sinful posterity.' Bossuet, Flechier, and the other celebrated French preachers, very often begin their discourses with laboured and sublime introductions. These raise attention, and throw a lustre on the subject: but let every speaker be much on his guard against striking a higher note at the beginning than he is able to keep up in his progress.

In the fourth place, An introduction should usually be carried on in the calm manner. This is seldom the place for vehemence and passion. Emotions must rise as the discourse advances. The minds of the hearers must be gradually prepared, before the speaker can venture on strong and passionate sentiments. The exceptions to this rule are, when the subject is such, that the very mention of it naturally awakens some passionate emotion; or when the unexpected presence of some person or object, in a popular assembly, inflames the speaker, and makes him break forth with unusual warmth. Either of these will justify what is called the exordium 'ab abrupto.' Thus the appearance of Catiline in the senate renders the vehement beginning of Cicero's first oration against him very natural and proper: 'Quousque tandem, Catilina, abutere patientiâ nostrâ?' And thus Bishop Atterbury, in preaching from this text, 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me,' ventures on breaking forth with this bold exordium: 'And can any man then be offended in thee, blessed Jesus?' which address to our Saviour he continues for a page or two, till he enters on the division of his subject. But such introductions as these should be hazarded by very few, as they promise so much vehemence and unction through the rest of the discourse, that it is very difficult to fulfil the expectations of the hearers.

At the same time, though the introduction is not the place in which warm emotions are usually to be attempted, yet I must take

notice, that it ought to prepare the way for such as are designed to be raised in subsequent parts of the discourse.* The orator should, in the beginning, turn the minds of his hearers towards those sentiments and feelings which he seeks to awaken in the course of his speech. According, for instance, as it is compassion, or indignation, or contempt, on which his discourse is to rest, he ought to sow the seeds of these in his introduction; he ought to begin with breathing that spirit which he means to inspire. Much of the orator's art and ability is shewn, in thus striking properly at the commencement, the key-note, if we may so express it, of the rest of his oration.

In the fifth place, It is a rule in introductions, not to anticipate any material part of the subject. When topics, or arguments, which are afterward to be enlarged upon, are hinted at, and, in part, brought forth in the introduction, they lose the grace of novelty upon their second appearance. The impression intended to be made by any capital thought, is always made with the greatest advantage, when it is made entire, and in its proper place.

In the last place, The introduction ought to be proportioned, both in length, and in kind, to the discourse that is to follow: in length, as nothing can be more absurd than to erect a very great portico before a small building; and in kind, as it is no less absurd to overcharge, with superb ornaments, the portico of a plain dwelling-house, or to make the entrance to a monument as gay as that to an arbour. Common sense directs that every part of a discourse should be suited to the strain and spirit of the whole.

These are the principal rules that relate to introductions. They are adapted, in a great measure, equally to discourses of all kinds. In pleadings at the bar, or speeches in public assemblies, particular care must be taken not to employ any introduction of that kind, which the adverse party may lay hold of, and turn to his advantage. To this inconvenience all those introductions are exposed, which are taken from general and common-place topics; and it never fails to give an adversary a considerable triumph, if, by giving a small turn to something we had said in our exordium, he can appear to convert to his own favour, the principles with which we had set out, in beginning our attack upon him. In the case of replies, Quinctilian makes an observation which is very worthy of notice; that introductions, drawn from something that has been said in the course of the debate, have always a peculiar grace; and the reason he gives for it is just and sensible: 'Multum gratiæ exordio est, quod ab actione diversæ partis materiam trahit; hoc ipso, quod non compositum domi, sed ibi atque e re natum; et facilitate famam ingenii auget; et facie simplicis, sumptique e proximo sermonis, fidem quoque acquirit; adeo, ut etiamsi reliqua scripta atque elaborata sint, tamen videatur tota extemporalis

oratio, cujus initium nihil præparatum habuisse, manifestum est.'*

In sermons, such a practice as this cannot take place; and, indeed, in composing sermons, few things are more difficult than to remove an appearance of stiffness from an introduction, when a formal one is used. The French preachers, as I before observed, are often very splendid and lively in their introductions; but, among us, attempts of this kind are not always so successful. When long introductions are formed upon some common-place topic, as the desire of happiness being natural to man, or the like, they never fail of being tedious. Variety should be studied in this part of composition as much as possible; often it may be proper to begin without any introduction at all, unless, perhaps, one or two sentences. Explanatory introductions from the context, are the most simple of any, and frequently the best that can be used: but as they are in hazard of becoming dry, they should never be long. An historical introduction has, generally, a happy effect to rouse attention; when one can lay hold upon some noted fact that is connected with the text or the discourse, and, by a proper illustration of it, open the way to the subject that is to be treated of.

After the introduction, what commonly comes next in order, is the proposition, or enunciation of the subject; concerning which there is nothing to be said, but that it should be as clear and distinct as possible, and expressed in few and plain words, without the least affectation. To this generally succeeds the division, or the laying down the method of the discourse; on which it is necessary to make some observations. I do not mean, that in every discourse, a formal division or distribution of it into parts, is requisite. There are many occasions of public speaking when this is neither requisite nor would be proper; when the discourse perhaps, is to be short, or only one point is to be treated of; or when the speaker does not choose to warn his hearers of the method he is to follow, or of the conclusion to which he seeks to bring them. Order of one kind or other is, indeed, essential to every good discourse; that is, every thing should be so arranged, as that what goes before may give light and force to what follows. But this may be accomplished by means of a concealed method. What we call division is, when the method is propounded in form to the hearers.

* 'An introduction, which is founded upon the pleading of the opposite party, is extremely graceful; for this reason, that it appears not to have been meditated at home, but to have taken rise from the business, and to have been composed on the spot. Hence, it gives to the speaker the reputation of a quick invention, and adds weight likewise to his discourse, as artless and unlaboured; insomuch, that though all the rest of his oration should be studied and written, yet the whole discourse has the appearance of being extemporary, as it is evident that the introduction to it was unpremeditated.'

The discourse in which this sort of division most commonly takes place, is a sermon; and a question has been moved, whether this method of laying down heads, as it is called, be the best method of preaching. A very able judge, the Archbishop of Cambray, in his Dialogues on Eloquence, declares strongly against it. He observes, that it is a modern invention; that it was never practised by the fathers of the church; and, what is certainly true, that it took its rise from the schoolmen, when metaphysics began to be introduced into preaching. He is of opinion, that it renders a sermon stiff; that it breaks the unity of the discourse; and that, by the natural connexion of one part with another, the attention of the hearers would be carried along the whole with more advantage.

But, notwithstanding his authority and his arguments, I cannot help being of opinion, that the present method of dividing a sermon into heads, ought not to be laid aside. Established practice has now given it so much weight, that, were there nothing more in its favour, it would be dangerous for any preacher to deviate so far from the common track. But the practice itself has also, in my judgment, much reason on its side. If formal partitions give a sermon less of the oratorial appearance, they render it, however, more clear, more easily apprehended, and, of course, more instructive to the bulk of hearers, which is always the main object to be kept in view. The heads of a sermon are great assistances to the memory and recollection of a hearer. They serve also to fix the attention. They enable him more easily to keep pace with the progress of the discourse; they give him pauses and resting-places, where he can reflect on what has been said, and look forward to what is to follow. They are attended with this advantage too, that they give the audience the opportunity of knowing, before-hand, when they are to be released from the fatigue of attention, and thereby make them follow the speaker more patiently: 'Reficit audientem,' says Quinctilian, taking notice of this very advantage of divisions in other discourses, 'Reficit audientem certo singulorum partium fine; non aliter quàm facientibus iter, multum detrahunt fatigationis notata spatia inscriptis lapidibus: nam et exhausti laboris nósse mensuram voluptati est; et hortatur ad reliqua fortius exequenda, scire quantum supersit.'* With regard to breaking the unity of a discourse, I cannot be of opinion that there arises, from that quarter, any argument against the method I am defending. If the unity be broken, it is to the nature of the heads, or topics, of which the speaker treats, that this is to be im-

* 'The conclusion of each head is a relief to the hearers; just as, upon a journey, the mile-stones, which are set upon the road, serve to diminish the traveller's fatigue. and we are always pleased with seeing our labour begin to lessen; and, by calculation how much remains, are stirred up to finish our task more cheerfully.'

puted; not to his laying them down in form. On the contrary, if his heads be well chosen, his marking them out, and distinguishing them, in place of impairing the unity of the whole, renders it more conspicuous and complete; by shewing how all the parts of a discourse hang upon one another, and tend to one point.

In a sermon, or in a pleading, or any discourse, where division is proper to be used, the most material rules are,

First, That the several parts into which the subject is divided, be really distinct from one another; that is, that no one include another. It were a very absurd division, for instance, if one should propose to treat first, of the advantages of virtue, and next, of those of justice or temperance; because, the first head evidently comprehends the second, as a genus does the species; which method of proceeding involves the subject in indistinctness and disorder.

Secondly, In division, we must take care to follow the order of nature; beginning with the simplest points, such as are easiest apprehended, and necessary to be first discussed; and proceeding thence to those which are built upon the former, and which suppose them to be known. We must divide the subject into those parts into which most easily and naturally it is resolved; that it may seem to split itself, and not to be violently torn asunder: 'Dividere,' as is commonly said, 'non frangere.'

Thirdly, The several members of a division ought to exhaust the subject; otherwise we do not make a complete division; we exhibit the subject by pieces and corners only, without giving any such plan as displays the whole.

Fourthly, The terms in which our partitions are expressed, should be as concise as possible. Avoid all circumlocution here. Admit not a single word but what is necessary. Precision is to be studied, above all things, in laying down a method. It is this which chiefly makes a division appear neat and elegant; when the several heads are propounded in the clearest, most expressive, and, at the same time, the fewest words possible. This never fails to strike the hearers agreeably; and is, at the same time, of consequence towards making the divisions be more easily remembered.

Fifthly, Avoid an unnecessary multiplication of heads. To split a subject into a great many minute parts, by divisions and subdivisions without end, has always a bad effect in speaking. It may be proper in a logical treatise; but it makes an oration appear hard and dry, and unnecessarily fatigues the memory. In a sermon, there may be from three to five or six heads, including subdivisions; seldom should there be more.

In a sermon, or in a pleading at the bar, few things are of greater consequence, than a proper or happy division. It should be studied with much accuracy and care; for if one take a wrong method at

first setting out, it will lead them astray in all that follows. It will render the whole discourse either perplexed or languid; and though the hearers may not be able to tell where the fault or disorder lies, they will be sensible there is a disorder somewhere, and find themselves little affected by what is spoken. The French writers of sermons study neatness and elegance in the division of their subjects much more than the English do; whose distributions, though sensible and just, yet are often inartificial and verbose. Among the French, however, too much quaintness appears in their divisions, with an affectation of always setting out either with two, or with three, general heads of discourse. A division of Massillon's on this text, 'It is finished,' has been much extolled by the French critics: 'This imports,' says the preacher, 'consummation, first, of justice on the part of God; secondly, of wickedness on the part of men; thirdly, of love on the part of Christ.' This also of Bourdalone's has been much praised, from these words, 'My peace I give unto you:' 'Peace,' says he, 'first, to the understanding, by submission to faith; secondly, to the heart, by submission to the law.'

The next constituent part of a discourse, which I mentioned, was narration or explication. I put these two together, both because they fall nearly under the same rules, and because they commonly answer the same purpose; serving to illustrate the cause, or the subject of which the orator treats, before he proceeds to argue either on one side or other; or to make any attempt for interesting the passions of the hearers.

In pleadings at the bar, narration is often a very important part of the discourse, and requires to be particularly attended to. Besides its being in any case no easy matter to relate with grace and propriety, there is, in narrations at the bar, a peculiar difficulty. The pleader must say nothing but what is true; and, at the same time, he must avoid saying any thing that will hurt his cause. The facts which he relates, are to be the ground-work of all his future reasoning. To recount them so as to keep strictly within the bounds of truth, and yet to present them under the colours most favourable to his cause; to place, in the most striking light, every circumstance which is to his advantage, and to soften and weaken such as make against him, demand no small exertion of skill and dexterity. He must always remember, that if he discovers too much art, he defeats his own purpose, and creates a distrust of his sincerity. Quinctilian very properly directs, 'Effugienda in hac præcipuè parte, omnis calliditatis suspicio; neque enim se usquam magis custodit judex, quàm cùm narrat orator; nihil tum videatur fictum; nihil sollicitum; omnia potius a causâ, quam ab oratore, profecta videantur.'*

* 'In this part of discourse, the speaker must be very careful to shun every appearance of art and cunning. For there is no time at which the judge is more upon

To be clear and distinct, to be probable, and to be concise, are the qualities which critics chiefly require in narration; each of which carries, sufficiently, the evidence of its importance. Distinctness belongs to the whole train of the discourse, but is especially requisite in narration, which ought to throw light on all that follows. A fact, or a single circumstance left in obscurity, and misapprehended by the judge, may destroy the effect of all the argument and reasoning which the speaker employs. If his narration be improbable, the judge will not regard it; and if it be tedious and diffuse, he will be tired of it, and forget it. In order to produce distinctness, besides the study of the general rules of perspicuity which were formerly given, narration requires particular attention to ascertain clearly the names, the dates, the places, and every other material circumstance of the facts recounted. In order to be probable in narration, it is material to enter into the characters of the persons of whom we speak, and to shew, that their actions proceeded from such motives as are natural, and likely to gain belief. In order to be as concise as the subject will admit, it is necessary to throw out all superfluous circumstances; the rejection of which will likewise tend to make our narration more forcible and more clear.

Cicero is very remarkable for his talent of narration; and from the examples in his orations much may be learned. The narration, for instance, in the celebrated oration *Prò Milone*, has been often and justly admired. His scope is to shew, that though in fact Clodius was killed by Milo, or his servants, yet that it was only in self-defence; and that the design had been laid, not by Milo against Clodius, but by Clodius against Milo's life. All the circumstances for rendering this probable are painted with wonderful art. In relating the manner of Milo's setting out from Rome, he gives the most natural description of a family excursion to the country, under which it was impossible that any bloody design could be concealed. 'He remained,' says he, 'in the senate-house that day, till all the business was over. He came home, changed his clothes deliberately, and waited for some time, till his wife had got all her things ready for going with him in his carriage to the country. He did not set out till such time as Clodius might easily have been in Rome, if he had not been lying in wait for Milo by the way. By and by, Clodius met him on the road, on horseback, like a man prepared for action, no carriage, nor his wife, as was usual, nor any family equipage along with him; whilst Milo, who is supposed to be meditating slaughter and assassination, is travelling in a carriage with his wife, wrapped up in his cloak, embarrassed with baggage,

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his guard, than when the pleader is relating facts. Let nothing then seem feigned; nothing anxiously concealed. Let all that is said, appear to arise from the cause itself, and not to be the work of the orator.'

and attended by a great train of women servants, and boys.' He goes on, describing the rencountre that followed; Clodius's servants attacking those of Milo, and killing the driver of his carriage; Milo jumping out, throwing off his cloak, and making the best defence he could, while Clodius's servants endeavoured to surround him; and then concludes his narration with a very delicate and happy stroke. He does not say in plain words, that Milo's servants killed Clodius, but that 'in the midst of the tumult, Milo's servants, without the orders, without the knowledge, without the presence of their master, did what every master would have wished his servants, in a like conjuncture, to have done.'*

In sermons, where there is seldom any occasion for narration, explication of the subject to be discoursed on, comes in the place of narration at the bar, and is to be taken up much on the same tone; that is, it must be concise, clear, and distinct; and in a style correct and elegant, rather than highly adorned. To explain the doctrine of the text with propriety; to give a full and perspicuous account of the nature of that virtue or duty which forms the subject of the discourse, is properly the didactic part of preaching; on the right execution of which much depends for all that comes afterward in the way of persuasion. The great art in succeeding in it, is, to meditate profoundly on the subject, so as to be able to place it in a clear and strong point of view. Consider what light other passages of Scripture throw upon it; consider whether it be a subject nearly related to some other, from which it is proper to distinguish it: consider whether it can be illustrated to advantage by comparing it with, or opposing it to, some other thing; by inquiring into causes, or tracing effects; by pointing out examples, or appealing to the feelings of the hearers; that thus, a definite, precise, circumstantial view may be afforded of the doctrine to be inculcated. Let the preacher be persuaded, that, by such distinct and apt illustrations of the

'Milo, cùm in Senatu fuisset eo die, quoad Senatus dimissus est, domum venit. Calceos et vestimenta mutavit; paulisper, dùm se uxor (ut fit) comparat, commoratus est; deinde profectus est, id temporis cùm jam Clodius, si quidem eo die Romam venturus erat, redire potuisset. Obviam fit ei Clodius expeditus, in equo, nullâ rhedâ, nullis impedimentis, nullis Græcis comitibus, ut solebat; sine uxore, quod nunquam fere. Cum hic insidiator, qui iter illud ad cædem faciendam apparâsset, cum uxore veheretur in rhedâ, pænulatus, vulgi magno impedimento, ac muliebri et delicato ancillarum puerorumque comitatu. Fit obviam Clodio ante fundum ejus, hora fere undecima, aut non multo secus. Statim complures cum telis in hunc faciunt de loco superiore impetum; adversi rhedarium occidunt; cùm autem hic de rhedâ, rejecta pænula desiluisset, seque acri animo defenderet, illi qui erant cum Clodio, gladiis eductis, partim recurrere ad rhedam, ut a tergo Milonem adorirentur; partim, quod hunc jam interfectum putarent, cædere incipiunt ejus servos qui post erant; ex quibus qui animo fideli in dominum et præsenti fuerunt, partim occisi sunt; partim cum ad rhedam pugnare viderunt, et domino succurrere prohiberentur, Milonemque occisum etiam ex ipso Clodio audirent, et ita esse putarent, fecerunt id servi Milonis (dicam enim non derivandi criminis causâ, sed ut factum est) neque imperante, neque sciente, neque præsente domino, quod suos quisque servos in tali re facere voluisset.'

known truths of religion, it may both display great merit in the way of composition, and, what he ought to consider as far more valuable, render his discourses weighty, instructive, and useful.

LECTURE XXXII.

CONDUCT OF A DISCOURSE---THE ARGUMENTATIVE PART---THE PATHETIC PART---THE PERORATION.

In treating of the constituent parts of a regular discourse or oration, I have already considered the introduction, the division, and the narration or explication. I proceed next to treat of the argumentative or reasoning part of a discourse. In whatever place, or on whatever subject one speaks, this, beyond doubt, is of the greatest consequence. For the great end for which men speak on any serious occasion, is to convince their hearers of something being either true, or right, or good; and, by means of this conviction, to influence their practice. Reason and argument make the foundation, as I have often inculcated, of all manly and persuasive eloquence.

Now, with respect to arguments, three things are requisite. First, the invention of them; secondly, the proper disposition and arrangement of them; and thirdly, the expressing of them in such style and manner, as to give them their full force.

The first of these, invention, is, without doubt, the most material, and the ground-work of the rest. But, with respect to this, I am afraid it is beyond the power of art to give any real assistance. Art cannot go so far, as to supply a speaker with arguments on every cause, and every subject; though it may be of considerable use in assisting him to arrange and express those, which his knowledge of the subject has discovered. For it is one thing to discover the reasons that are most proper to convince men, and another, to manage these reasons with the most advantage. The latter is all that rhetoric can pretend to.

The ancient rhetoricians did indeed attempt to go much farther than this. They attempted to form rhetoric into a more complete system; and professed not only to assist public speakers in setting off their arguments to most advantage; but to supply the defect of their invention, and to teach them where to find arguments on every subject and cause. Hence their doctrine of topics, or 'loci communes,' and 'sedes argumentorum,' which makes so great a figure in the writings of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quinctilian. These topics, or loci, were no other than general ideas applicable to a great many different subjects, which the orator was directed to

consult; in order to find out materials for his speech. They had their intrinsic and extrinsic loci; some loci, that were common to all the different kinds of public speaking, and some that were peculiar to each. The common or general loci, were such as genus and species, cause and effect, antecedents and consequents, likeness and contrariety, definition, circumstances of time and place; and a great many more of the same kinds. For each of the different kinds of public speaking, they had their 'loci personarem,' and 'loci rerum:' as in demonstrative orations, for instance, the heads from which any one could be decried or praised; his birth, his country, his education, his kindred, the qualities of his body, the qualities of his mind, the fortune he enjoyed, the stations he had filled, &c.; and in deliberative orations, the topics that might be used in recommending any public measure, or dissuading from it; such as, honesty, justice, facility, profit, pleasure, glory, assistance from friends, mortification to enemies, and the like.

The Grecian sophists were the first inventors of this artificial system of oratory; and they shewed a prodigious subtilty and fertility in the contrivance of these loci. Succeeding rhetoricians, dazzled by the plan, wrought them up into so regular a system, that one would think they meant to teach how a person might mechanically become an orator, without any genius at all. They gave him receipts for making speeches, on all manner of subjects. At the same time, it is evident, that though this study of commonplaces might produce very showy academical declamations, it could never produce useful discourses on real business. The loci indeed supplied a most exuberant fecundity of matter. One who had no other aim but to talk copiously and plausibly, by consulting them on every subject, and laying hold of all that they suggested, might discourse without end; and that too, though he had none but the most superficial knowledge of his subject. But such discourse could be no other than trivial. What is truly solid and persuasive, must be drawn 'ex visceribus causæ,' from a thorough knowledge of the subject, and profound meditation on it. They who would direct students of oratory to any other sources of argumentation, only delude them; and by attempting to render rhetoric too perfect an art, they render it, in truth, a trifling and childish study.

On this doctrine, therefore, of the rhetorical loci, or topics, I think it superfluous to insist. If any think that the knowledge of them may contribute to improve their invention, and extend their views, they must consult Aristotle and Quinctilian, or what Cicero has written on this head, in his treatise 'De Inventione,' his 'Topica,' and second book 'De Oratore.' But when they are to prepare a discourse, by which they propose to convince a judge, or to produce any considerable effect upon an assembly, I would

advise them to lay aside their common-places, and to think closely of their subject. Demosthenes, I dare say, consulted none of the loci, when he was inciting the Athenians to take arms against Philip; and where Cicero has had recourse to them, his orations are so much the worse on that account.

I proceed to what is of more real use, to point out the assistance that can be given, not with respect to the invention, but with respect to the disposition and conduct of arguments.

Two different methods may be used by orators in the conduct of their reasoning; the terms of art for which are, the Analytic, and the Synthetic method. The analytic is, when the orator conceals his intention concerning the point he is to prove, till he has gradually brought his hearers to the designed conclusion. They are led on, step by step, from one known truth to another, till the conclusion be stolen upon them, as the natural consequence of a chain of propositions. As for instance, when one intending to prove the being of a God, sets out with observing that every thing which we see in the world has had a beginning; that whatever has had a beginning, must have had a prior cause; that in human productions, art shewn in the effect, necessarily infers design in the cause: and proceeds leading you on from one cause to another, till you arrive at one supreme First Cause, from whom is derived all the order and design visible in his works. This is much the same with the Socratic method, by which that philosopher silenced the sophists of his age. It is a very artful method of reasoning; may be carried on with much beauty, and is proper to be used when the hearers are much prejudiced against any truth, and by imperceptible steps must be led to conviction.

But there are few subjects that will admit this method, and not many occasions on which it is proper to be employed. The mode of reasoning most generally used, and most suited to the train of popular speaking, is what is called the synthetic; when the point to be proved is fairly laid down, and one argument after another is made to bear upon it, till the hearers be fully convinced.

Now, in all arguing, one of the first things to be attended to is, among the various arguments which may occur upon a cause, to make a proper selection of such as appear to one's self the most solid; and to employ these as the chief means of persuasion. Every speaker should place himself in the situation of a hearer, and think how he would be affected by those reasons, which he purposes to employ for persuading others. For he must not expect to impose on mankind by mere arts of speech. They are not so easily imposed on, as public speakers are sometimes apt to think. Shrewdness and sagacity are found among all ranks; and the speaker may be praised for his fine discourse, while yet the hearers are not persuaded of the truth of any one thing he has uttered.

Supposing the arguments properly chosen, it is evident that their effect will, in some measure, depend on the right arrangement of them; so as they shall not justle and embarrass one another, but give mutual aid; and bear with the fairest and fullest direction on the point in view. Concerning this, the following rules may be taken:

In the first place, Avoid blending arguments confusedly together, that are of a separate nature. All arguments whatever are directed to prove one or other of these three things; that something is true; that it is morally right or fit; or that it is profitable and good. These make the three great subjects of discussion among mankind; truth, duty, and interest. But the arguments directed towards any one of them are generically distinct; and he who blends them all under one topic, which he calls his argument, as, in sermons especially, is too often done, will render his reasoning indistinct and inelegant. Suppose, for instance, that I am recommending to an audience benevolence, or the love of our neighbour; and that I take my first argument from the inward satisfaction which a benevolent temper affords; my second from the obligation wh the example of Christ lays upon us to this duty; and my third, from its tendency to procure us the good-will of all around us; my arguments are good, but I have arranged them wrong: for my first and third arguments are taken from considerations of interest, internal peace, and external advantages; and between these, I have introduced one, which rests wholly upon duty. I should have kept those classes of arguments, which are addressed to different principles in human nature, separate and distinct.

In the second place, With regard to the different degrees of strength in arguments, the general rule is, to advance in the way of climax, 'ut augeatur semper, et increscat oratio.' This especially is to be the course, when the speaker has a clear cause, and is confident that he can prove it fully. He may then adventure to begin with feebler arguments; rising gradually, and not putting forth his whole strength till the last, when he can trust to his making a successful impression on the minds of hearers, prepared by what has gone before. But this rule is not to be always followed. For, if he distrusts his cause, and has but one material argument on which to lay the stress, putting less confidence in the rest, in this case, it is often proper for him to place this material argument in the front; to pre-occupy the hearers early, and make the strongest effort at first: that, having removed prejudices, and disposed them to be favourable, the rest of his reasoning may be listened to with more candour. When it happens, that amidst a variety of arguments, there are one or two which we are sensible are more inconclusive than the rest, and yet proper to be used, Cicero advises to place these in the middle, as a station

less conspicuous than either the beginning, or the end, of the train of reasoning.

In the third place, When our arguments are strong and satisfactory, the more they are distinguished and treated apart from each other, the better. Each can then bear to be brought out by itself, placed in its full light, amplified, and rested upon. But when our arguments are doubtful, and only of the presumptive kind, it is safer to throw them together in a crowd, and to run them into one another; 'ut quæ sunt naturâ imbecilla,' as Quinctilian speaks, 'mutuo auxilio sustineantur;' that though infirm of themselves, they may serve mutually to prop each other. He gives a good example, in the case of one who was accused of murdering a relation, to whom he was heir. Direct proof was wanting; but, 'you expected a succession, and a great succession; you were in distressed circumstances; you were pushed to the utmost by your creditors; you had offended your relation, who had made you his heir; you knew that he was just then intending to alter his will; no time was to be lost. Each of these particulars, by itself,' says the author, 'is inconclusive; but when they are assembled in one group, they have effect.'

Of the distinct amplification of one persuasive argument, we have a most beautiful example in Cicero's oration for Milo. The argument is taken from a circumstance of time. Milo was candidate for the consulship; and Clodius was killed a few days before the election. He asks, if any one could believe that Milo would be mad enough, at such a critical time, by a most odious assassination, to alienate from himself the favour of people, whose suffrages he was so anxiously courting? This argument, the moment it is suggested, appears to have considerable weight. But it was not enough, simply to suggest it; it could bear to be dwelt upon, and brought out into full light. The orator, therefore, draws a just and striking picture of that solicitous attention with which candidates, at such a season, always found it necessary to cultivate the good opinion of the people: 'Quo tempore,' says he, '(Scio enim quam timida sit ambitio, quantaque et quam sollicita, cupiditas consulatûs) omnia, non modo quæ reprehendi palam, sed etiam quæ obscure cogitari possunt, timemus. Rumorem, fabulam fictam et falsam, perhorrescimus; ora omnium atque oculos intuemur. Nihil enim est tam tenerum, tam aut fragile aut flexibile, quam voluntas erga nos sensusque civium, qui non modo improbitati irascuntur candidatorum, sed etiam in recte factis sæpe fastidiunt.' From all which he most justly concludes, 'Hunc diem igitur Campi, speratum atque exoptatum, sibi proponens Milo, cruentis manibus, scelus atque facinus præ se ferens, ad illa centuriarum auspicia veniebat? Quam hoc in illo minimum credibile?'*

* 'Well do I know to what length the timidity goes of such as are candidates for public offices, and how many anxious cares and attentions, a canvas for the consulship

But though such amplification as this be extremely beautiful, I must add a caution,

In the fourth place, Against extending arguments too far, and multiplying them too much. This serves rather to render a cause suspected, than to give it weight. An unnecessary multiplicity of arguments both burdens the memory, and detracts from the weight of that conviction which a few well-chosen arguments carry. It is to be observed too, that in the amplification of arguments, a diffuse and spreading method, beyond the bounds of reasonable illustration, is always enfeebling. It takes off greatly from that 'vis et acumen,' which should be the distinguishing character of the argumentative part of a discourse. When a speaker dwells long on a favourite argument, and seeks to turn it into every possible light, it almost always happens, that, fatigued with the effort, he loses the spirit with which he set out, and concludes with feebleness what he began with force. There is a proper temperance in reasoning as there is in other parts of a discourse.

After due attention given to the proper arrangement of arguments, what is next requisite for their success, is to express them in such a style, and to deliver them in such a manner, as shall give them full force. On these heads I must refer the reader to the directions I have given in treating of style, in former Lectures; and to the directions I am afterward to give concerning pronunciation and delivery.

I proceed, therefore, next, to another essential part of discourse which I mentioned as the fifth in order, that is, the pathetic; in which, if any where, eloquence reigns, and exerts its power. I shall not, in beginning this head, take up time in combating the scruples of those who have moved a question whether it be consistent with fairness and candour in a public speaker, to address the passions of his audience? This is a question about words alone, and which common sense easily determines. In inquiries after mere truth, in matters of simple information and instruction, there is no question that the passions have no concern, and that all attempts to move them are absurd. Wherever conviction is the object, it is the understanding alone that is to be applied to. It

necessarily carries along with it. On such an occasion, we are afraid not only of what we may openly be reproached with, but of what others may think of us in secret. The slightest rumour, the most improbable tale that can be devised to our prejudice, alarms and disconcerts us. We study the countenance and the looks of all around us. For nothing is so delicate, so frail and uncertain, as the public favour. Our fellow-citizens not only are justly offended with the vices of candidates, but even, on occasion of meritorious actions, are apt to conceive capricious disgusts. Is there then the least credibility that Milo, after having so long fixed his attention on the important and wished-for day of election, would dare to have any thoughts of presenting himself before the august Assembly of the People, as a murderer and assassin, with his hands imbrued in blood?"

is by argument and reasoning, that one man attempts to satisfy another of what is true, or right, or just; but if persuasion be the object, the case is changed. In all that relates to practice, there is no man who seriously means to persuade another, but addresses himself to his passions more or less; for this plain reason, that passions are the great springs of human action. The most virtuous man, in treating of the most virtuous subject, seeks to touch the heart of him to whom he speaks; and makes no scruple to raise his indignation at injustice, or his pity to the distressed, though pity and indignation be passions.

In treating of this part of eloquence, the ancients made the same sort of attempt as they employed with respect to the argumentative part, in order to bring rhetoric into a more perfect system. They inquired metaphysically into the nature of every passion; they gave a definition and a description of it; they treated of its causes, its effects, and its concomitants; and thence deduced rules for working upon it. Aristotle in particular has, in his treatise upon Rhetoric, discussed the nature of the passions with much profoundness and subtilty; and what he has written on that head, may be read with no small profit, as a valuable piece of moral philosophy; but whether it will have any effect in rendering an orator more pathetic, is to me doubtful. It is not, I am afraid, any philosophical knowledge of the passions, that can confer this talent. We must be indebted for it to nature, a certain strong and happy sensibility of mind; and one may be a most thorough adept in all the speculative knowledge that can be acquired concerning the passions, and remain at the same time a cold and dry speaker. The use of rules and instructions on this or any other part of oratory, is not to supply the want of genius, but to direct it, where it is found, into its proper channel; to assist it in exerting itself with most advantage, and to prevent the errors and extravagances into which it is sometimes apt to run. On the head of the pathetic, the following directions appear to me to be useful.

The first is, To consider carefully, whether the subject admit the pathetic, and render it proper; and if it does, what part of the discourse is the most proper for attempting it. To determine these points belongs to good sense; for it is evident, that there are many subjects which admit not the pathetic at all, and that even in those that are susceptible of it, an attempt to excite the passions in the wrong place, may expose an orator to ridicule. All that can be said in general is, that if we expect any emotion which we raise to have a lasting effect, we must be careful to bring over to our side, in the first place, the understanding and judgment. The hearers must be convinced that there are good and sufficient grounds for their entering with warmth into the cause. They must be able to justify to themselves the passion which they feel; and re-

main satisfied that they are not carried away by mere delusion. Unless their minds be brought into this state, although they may have been heated by the orator's discourse, yet, as soon as he ceases to speak, they will resume their ordinary tone of thought; and the emotion which he has raised will die entirely away. Hence most writers assign the pathetic to the peroration or conclusion, as its natural place; and, no doubt, all other things being equal, this is the impression that one would choose to make last, leaving the minds of the hearers warmed with the subject, after argument and reasoning had produced their full effect: but wherever it is introduced, I must advise,

In the second place, Never to set apart a head of a discourse in form, for raising any passion; never give warning that you are about to be pathetic; and call upon your hearers, as is sometimes done, to follow you in the attempt. This almost never fails to prove a refrigerant to passion. It puts the hearers immediately on their guard, and disposes them for criticising, much more than for being moved. The indirect method of making an impression is likely to be more successful; when you seize the critical moment that is favourable to emotion, in whatever part of the discourse it occurs, and then, after due preparation, throw in such circumstances, and present such glowing images, as may kindle their passions before they are aware. This can often be done more happily, in a few sentences, inspired by natural warmth, than in a long and studied address.

In the third place, It is necessary to observe, that there is a great difference between shewing the hearers that they ought to be moved, and actually moving them. This distinction is not sufficiently attended to, especially by preachers, who, if they have a head in their sermon to shew how much we are bound to be grateful to God, or to be compassionate to the distressed, are apt to imagine this to be a pathetic part. Now, all the arguments you produce to shew me, why it is my duty, why it is reasonable and fit, that I should be moved in a certain way, go no farther than to dispose or prepare me for entering into such an emotion; but they do not actually excite it. To every emotion or passion, nature has adapted a set of corresponding objects; and, without setting these before the mind, it is not in the power of any orator to raise that emotion. I am warmed with gratitude, I am touched with compassion, not when a speaker shews me that these are noble dispositions, and that it is my duty to feel them; or when he exclaims against me for my indifference and coldness. All this time, he is speaking only to my reason or conscience. He must describe the kindness and tenderness of my friend; he must set before me the distress suffered by the person for whom he would interest me; then, and not till then, my heart begins to be touched, my gratitude or my compassion begins

to flow. The foundation, therefore, of all successive execution in the way of pathetic oratory is, to paint the object of that passion which we wish to raise, in the most natural and striking manner; to describe it with such circumstances as are likely to awaken it in the minds of others. Every passion is most strongly excited by sensation; as anger by the feeling of an injury, or the presence of the injurer. Next to the influence of sense, is that of memory; and next to memory, is the influence of the imagination. Of this power, therefore, the orator must avail himself, so as to strike the imagination of the hearers with circumstances which, in lustre and steadiness, resemble those of sensation and remembrance. In order to accomplish this,

In the fourth place, the only effectual method is, To be moved yourselves. There are a thousand interesting circumstances suggested by real passion, which no art can imitate, and no refinement can supply. There is obviously a contagion among the passions.

> Ut ridentibus arrident, sic flentibus adflent,
> Humani vultus.

The internal emotion of the speaker adds a pathos to his words, his looks, his gestures, and his whole manner, which exerts a power almost irresistible over those who hear him.* But on this point, though the most material of all, I shall not now insist, as I have often had occasion before to shew, that all attempts towards becoming pathetic, when we are not moved ourselves, expose us to certain ridicule.

Quinctilian, who discourses upon this subject with much good sense, takes pains to inform us of the method which he used, when he was a public speaker, for entering into those passions which he wanted to excite in others; setting before his own imagination what he calls 'phantasiæ,' or 'visiones,' strong pictures of the distress or indignities which they had suffered, whose cause he was to plead, and for whom he was to interest his hearers; dwelling upon these, and putting himself in their situation, till he was affected by a passion, similar to that which the persons themselves had felt.† To this method he attributes all the success he ever

* 'Quid enim aliud est causæ ut lugentes, in recenti dolore, disertissime quædam exclamare videantur; et ira nonnunquam in indoctis quoque eloquentiam faciat; quàm quod illis inest vis mentis, et veritas ipsa Morum? quare in iis quæ verisimilia esse volumus, simus ipsi similes eorum qui vere patiuntur, affectibus? et a tali animo proficiscatur oratio qualem facere judicem volet. Afficiamur antequam afficere conemur.' QUINCT. lib. 6.

† 'Ut hominem occisum querar; non omnia quæ in re presenti accidisse credibile est, in oculis habebo? Non percussor ille subitus erumpet? non expavescet circumventus? exclamabit, vel rogabit, vel fugiet? non ferientem, non concidentem videbo? non animo sanguis, et pallor, et gemitus, extremus denique expirantis hiatus, insidet?—Ubi vero miseratione opus erit, nobis ea de quibus querimur accidisse credamus, atque id

had in public speaking; and there can be no doubt that whatever tends to increase an orator's sensibility, will add greatly to his pathetic powers.

In the fifth place, It is necessary to attend to the proper language of the passions. We should observe in what manner any one expresses himself who is under the power of a real and a strong passion; and we shall always find his language unaffected and simple. It may be animated, indeed, with bold and strong figures, but it will have no ornament or finery. He is not at leisure to follow out the play of imagination. His mind being wholly seized by one object, which has heated it, he has no other aim, but to represent that in all its circumstances, as strongly as he feels it. This must be the style of the orator when he would be pathetic; and this will be his style, if he speaks from real feeling; bold, ardent, simple. No sort of description will then succeed, but what is written 'fervente calamo.' If he stay till he can work up his style, and polish and adorn it, he will infallibly cool his own ardour; and then he will touch the heart no more. His composition will become frigid; it will be the language of one who describes, but who does not feel. We must take notice, that there is a great difference between painting to the imagination, and painting to the heart. The one may be done coolly and at leisure; the other must always be rapid and ardent. In the former, art and labour may be suffered to appear; in the latter, no effect can follow, unless it seem to be the work of nature only.

In the sixth place, Avoid interweaving any thing of a foreign nature with the pathetic part of a discourse. Beware of all digressions, which may interrupt or turn aside the natural course of the passion, when once it begins to rise and swell. Sacrifice all beauties, however bright and showy, which would divert the mind from the principal object, and which would amuse the imagination, rather than touch the heart. Hence comparisons are always dangerous, and generally quite improper, in the midst of passion. Beware even of reasoning unseasonably; or at least of carrying on a long and subtle train of reasoning, on occasions when the principal aim is to excite warm emotions.

In the last place, Never attempt prolonging the pathetic too much. Warm emotions are too violent to be lasting.* Study the

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animo nostro persuadeamus. Nos illi simus, quos gravia, indigna, tristia, passos queramur. Nec agamus rem quasi alienam; sed assumamus parumper illum dolorem. Ita dicemus, quæ in simili nostro casu dicturi essemus.' Lib. 6.

* 'Nunquam debet esse longa miseratio; nam cùm veros dolores mitiget tempus, citius evanescat, necesse est illa, quam dicendo effinximus, imago: in quâ, si moremur, lacrymis fatigatur auditor, et requiescit, et ab illo quem ceperat impetu, in rationem redit. Non patiamur igitur frigescere hoc opus; et affectum, cum ad summum perduxerimus, relinquamus; nec speremus fore, ut aliena mala quisquam diu ploret.' QUINCT. lib. 6.

proper time of making a retreat; of making a transition from the passionate to the calm tone; in such a manner, however, as to descend without falling, by keeping up the same strain of sentiment that was carried on before, though now expressing it with more moderation. Above all things, beware of straining passion too far; of attempting to raise it to unnatural heights. Preserve always a due regard to what the hearers will bear; and remember, that he who stops not at the proper point; who attempts to carry them farther, in passion, than they will follow him, destroys his whole design. By endeavouring to warm them too much, he takes the most effectual method of freezing them completely.

Having given these rules concerning the pathetic, I shall give one example from Cicero, which will serve to illustrate several of them, particularly the last. It shall be taken from his last oration against Verres, wherein he describes the cruelty exercised by Verres, when governor of Sicily, against one Gavius, a Roman citizen. This Gavius had made his escape from prison, into which he had been thrown by the governor; and when just embarking at Messina, thinking himself now safe, had uttered some threats, that when he had once arrived at Rome, Verres should hear of him and be brought to account for having put a Roman citizen in chains. The chief magistrate of Messina, a creature of Verres's, instantly apprehends him, and gives information of his threatenings. The behaviour of Verres, on this occasion, is described in the most picturesque manner, and with all the colours which were proper, in order to excite against him the public indignation. He thanks the magistrate of Messina for his diligence. Filled with rage, he comes into the Forum; orders Gavius to be brought forth, the executioners to attend, and, against the laws, and contrary to the well-known privileges of a Roman citizen, commands him to be stripped naked, bound, and scourged publicly in a cruel manner. Cicero then proceeds thus: 'Cædebatur virgis, in medio foro Messanæ, civis Romanus, Judices!' every word rises above another in describing this flagrant enormity; and, 'Judices,' is brought out at the end with the greatest propriety: 'Cædebatur virgis, in medio foro Messanæ, civis Romanus, Judices! cum interea, nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia istius miseri, inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum audiebatur, nisi hæc, Civis Romanus sum. Hâc se commemoratione civitatis, omnia verbera depulsurum a corpore arbitrabatur. Is non modo hoc non perfecit, ut virgarum vim deprecaretur, sed cum imploraret sæpius usurparetque nomen civis, crux, crux inquam, infelici isto et ærumnoso, qui nunquam istam potestatem viderat, comparabatur. O nomen dulce libertatis! O jus eximium nostræ civitatis! O lex Porcia, legesque Semproniæ!—Huccine omnia tandem reciderunt, ut civis Romanus, in provinciâ populi

Romani, in oppido fœderatorum, ab eo qui beneficio populi Romani fasces et secures haberet, deligatus, in foro, virgis cæderetur !'*

Nothing can be finer, nor better conducted, than this passage. The circumstances are well chosen for exciting both the compassion of his hearers for Gavius, and their indignation against Verres. The style is simple; and the passionate exclamation, the address to liberty and the laws, is well timed, and in the proper style of passion. The orator goes on to exaggerate Verres's cruelty still farther, by another very striking circumstance. He ordered a gibbet to be erected for Gavius, not in the common place of execution, but just by the sea-shore, over-against the coast of Italy: 'Let him,' said he, 'who boasts so much of his being a Roman citizen, take a view from his gibbet of his own country.— This base insult over a dying man is the least part of his guilt. It was not Gavius alone that Verres meant to insult; but it was you, O Romans! it was every citizen who now hears me; in the person of Gavius, he scoffed at your rights, and shewed in what contempt he held the Roman name, and Roman liberties.'

Hitherto all is beautiful, animated, pathetic; and the model would have been perfect, if Cicero had stopped at this point. But his redundant and florid genius carried him farther. He must needs interest not his hearers only, but the beasts, the mountains, and the stones, against Verres; 'Si hæc non ad cives Romanos, non ad amicos nostræ civitatis, non ad eos qui populi Romani nomen audissent; denique si non ad homines, verum ad bestias; atque ut longius progrediar, si in aliquâ desertissimâ solitudine, ad saxa et ad scopulos hæc conqueri et deplorare vellem, tamen omnia muta atque inanima, tantâ et tam indignâ rerum atrocitate commoverentur.'†

* 'In the midst of the market-place of Messina, a Roman citizen, O Judges! was cruelly scourged with rods; when, in the mean time, amidst the noise of the blows which he suffered, no voice, no complaint of this unhappy man was heard, except this exclamation, Remember that I am a Roman citizen! By pleading this privilege of his birthright, he hoped to have stopped the strokes of the executioner. But his hopes were vain; for, so far was he from being able to obtain thereby any mitigation of his torture, that when he continued to repeat this exclamation, and to plead the rights of a citizen, a cross, a cross, I say, was preparing to be set up for the execution of this unfortunate person, who never before had beheld that instrument of cruel death. O sacred and honoured name of liberty! O boasted and revered privilege of a Roman citizen! O ye Porcian and Sempronian laws! to this issue have ye all come, that a citizen of Rome, in a province of the Roman empire, within an allied city, should publicly, in a market-place, be loaded with chains, and beaten with rods, at the command of one who, from the favour of the Roman people alone, derived all his authority and ensigns of power!'

† 'Were I employed in lamenting these instances of an atrocious oppression and cruelty, not among an assembly of Roman citizens, not among the allies of our state, not among those who had ever heard the name of the Roman people, not even among human creatures, but in the midst of the brute creation; and to go farther, were I pouring forth my lamentations to the stones, and to the rocks, in some remote and desert wilderness, even those mute and inanimate beings would, at the recital of such shocking indignities, be thrown into commotion.'

This, with all the deference due to so eloquent an orator, we must pronounce to be declamatory, not pathetic. This is straining the language of passion too far. Every hearer sees this immediately to be a studied figure of rhetoric; it may amuse him, but instead of inflaming him more, it, in truth, cools his passion. So dangerous it is to give scope to a flowery imagination, when one intends to make a strong and passionate impression.

No other part of discourse remains now to be treated of, except the peroration or conclusion. Concerning this, it is needless to say much, because it must vary so considerably, according to the strain of the preceding discourse. Sometimes the whole pathetic part comes in most properly at the peroration. Sometimes, when the discourse has been entirely argumentative, it is fit to conclude with summing up the arguments, placing them in one view, and leaving the impression of them full and strong on the mind of the audience. For the great rule of a conclusion, and what nature obviously suggests, is, to place that last on which we choose that the strength of our cause should rest.

In sermons, inferences from what has been said, make a common conclusion. With regard to these, care should be taken, not only that they rise naturally, but (what is less commonly attended to) that they should so much agree with the strain of sentiment throughout the discourse, as not to break the unity of the sermon. For inferences, how justly soever they may be deduced from the doctrine of the text, yet have a bad effect, if, at the conclusion of a discourse, they introduce some subject altogether new, and turn off our attention from the main object to which the preacher had directed our thoughts. They appear, in this case, like excrescences jutting out from the body, which form an unnatural addition to it; and tend to enfeeble the impression which the composition, as a whole, is calculated to make.

The most eloquent of the French, perhaps, indeed, of all modern orators, Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, terminates in a very moving manner, his funeral oration on the great Prince of Condé, with this return upon himself, and his old age: 'Accept, O Prince! these last efforts of a voice which you once well knew. With you all my funeral discourses are now to end. Instead of deploring the death of others, henceforth, it shall be my study to learn from you, how my own may be blessed. Happy, if, warned by those gray hairs, of the account which I must soon give of my ministry, I reserve, solely for that flock whom I ought to feed with the word of life, the feeble remains of a voice which now trembles, and of an ardour which is now on the point of being extinct.'*

* 'Agréez ces derniers efforts d'une voix qui vous fut connue. Vous mettrez fin à tous ces discours. Au lieu de déplorer la mort des autres, Grand Prince! dorénavant je veux apprendre de vous, à rendre la mienne sainte. Heureux, si averti par

In all discourses, it is a matter of importance to hit the precise time of concluding, so as to bring our discourse just to a point; neither ending abruptly and unexpectedly; nor disappointing the expectation of the hearers, when they look for the close; and continuing to hover round and round the conclusion, till they become heartily tired of us. We should endeavour to go off with a good grace; not to end with a languishing and drawling sentence; but to close with dignity and spirit, that we may leave the minds of the hearers warm; and dismiss them with a favourable impression of the subject and of the speaker.

LECTURE XXXIII.

PRONUNCIATION, OR DELIVERY.

HAVING treated of several general heads relating to eloquence, or public speaking, I now proceed to another very important part of the subject yet remaining, that is, the Pronunciation, or Delivery of a discourse. How much stress was laid upon this by the most eloquent of all orators, Demosthenes, appears from a noted saying of his, related both by Cicero and Quinctilian; when being asked, What was the first point in oratory? he answered, Delivery; and being asked, What was the second? and afterward, What was the third? he still answered, Delivery. There is no wonder that he should have rated this so high, and that for improving himself in it, he should have employed those assiduous and painful labours, which all the ancients take so much notice of; for, beyond doubt, nothing is of more importance. To superficial thinkers, the management of the voice and gesture, in public speaking, may appear to relate to decoration only, and to be one of the inferior arts of catching an audience. But this is far from being the case. It is intimately connected with what is, or ought to be, the end of all public speaking, persuasion; and therefore deserves the study of the most grave and serious speakers, as much as of those whose only aim is to please.

For, let it be considered, whenever we address ourselves to others by words, our intention certainly is to make some impression on those to whom we speak; it is to convey to them our own ideas and emotions. Now the tone of our voice, our looks, and gestures,

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ces cheveux blancs, du compte que je dois rendre de mon administration, je reserve au troupeau que je dois nourrir de la parole de vie, les restes d'une voix qui tombe, et d'une ardeur qui s'éteint.'—These are the last sentences of that oration; but the whole of the peroration from that passage, 'Venez, peuples, maintenant,' &c. though it is too long for insertion, is a great master-piece of pathetic eloquence.

interpret our ideas and emotions no less than words do; nay, the impression they make on others, is frequently much stronger than any that words can make. We often see, that an expressive look, or a passionate cry, unaccompanied by words, conveys to others more forcible ideas, and rouses within them stronger passions, than can be communicated by the most eloquent discourse. The signification of our sentiments, made by tones and gestures, has this advantage above that made by words, that it is the language of nature. It is that method of interpreting our mind which nature has dictated to all, and which is understood by all; whereas words are only arbitrary conventional symbols of our ideas; and, by consequence, must make a more feeble impression. So true is this, that, to render words fully significant, they must, almost in every case, receive some aid from the manner of pronunciation and delivery; and he who, in speaking, should employ bare words, without enforcing them by proper tones and accents, would leave us with a faint and indistinct impression, often with a doubtful and ambiguous conception, of what he had delivered. Nay, so close is the connexion between certain sentiments and the proper manner of pronouncing them, that he who does not pronounce them after that manner, can never persuade us, that he believes, or feels, the sentiments themselves. His delivery may be such as to give the lie to all that he asserts. When Marcus Callidius accused one of an attempt to poison him, but enforced his accusation in a languid manner, and without any warmth or earnestness of delivery, Cicero, who pleaded for the accused person, improved this into an argument of the falsity of the charge, 'An tu, M. Callidi, nisi fingeres, sic ageres?' In Shakspeare's Richard II. the Duchess of York thus impeaches the sincerity of her husband:

> Pleads he in earnest! Look upon his face,
> His eyes do drop no tears; his prayers are jest;
> His words come from his mouth; ours, from our breast;
> He prays but faintly, and would be denied;
> We pray with heart and soul.

But, I believe, it is needless to say any more in order to shew the high importance of a good delivery. I proceed, therefore, to such observations as appear to me most useful to be made on this head.

The great objects which every public speaker will naturally have in his eye in forming his delivery, are, first, to speak so as to be fully and easily understood by all who hear him; and next to speak with grace and force, so as to please and to move his audience. Let us consider what is most important with respect to each of these.*

* On this whole subject, Mr. Sheridan's Lectures on Elocution are very worthy of being consulted; and several hints are here taken from them.

In order to be fully and easily understood, the four chief requisites are, a due degree of loudness of voice; distinctness; slowness; and propriety of pronunciation.

The first attention of every public speaker, doubtless, must be to make himself be heard by all those to whom he speaks. He must endeavour to fill with his voice the space occupied by the assembly. This power of voice, it may be thought, is wholly a natural talent. It is so in a good measure; but, however, may receive considerable assistance from art. Much depends for this purpose on the proper pitch, and management of the voice. Every man has three pitches in his voice; the high, the middle, and the low one. The high, is that which he uses in calling aloud to some one at a distance. The low is, when he approaches to a whisper. The middle is, that which he employs in common conversation, and which he should generally use in public discourse. For it is a great mistake, to imagine that one must take the highest pitch of his voice, in order to be well heard by a great assembly. This is confounding two things which are different, loudness, or strength of sound, with the key, or note on which we speak. A speaker may render his voice louder without altering the key; and we shall always be able to give most body, most persevering force of sound, to that pitch of voice to which in conversation we are accustomed. Whereas, by setting out on our highest pitch or key, we certainly allow ourselves less compass, and are likely to strain our voice before we have done. We shall fatigue ourselves, and speak with pain; and whenever a man speaks with pain to himself, he is always heard with pain by his audience. Give the voice, therefore, full strength and swell of sound; but always pitch it on your ordinary speaking key. Make it a constant rule never to utter a greater quantity of voice than you can afford without pain to yourselves, and without any extraordinary effort. As long as you keep within these bounds, the other organs of speech will be at liberty to discharge their several offices with ease; and you will always have your voice under command. But whenever you transgress these bounds, you give up the reins, and have no longer any management of it. It is a useful rule too, in order to be well heard, to fix our eye on some of the most distant persons in the assembly, and to consider ourselves as speaking to them. We naturally and mechanically utter our words with such a degree of strength, as to make ourselves be heard by one to whom we address ourselves, provided he be within the reach of our voice. As this is the case in common conversation, it will hold also in public speaking. But remember, that in public as well as in conversation, it is possible to offend by speaking too loud. This extreme hurts the ear, by making the voice come upon it in rumbling indistinct masses; besides its giving the speaker the disagreeable appearance of

emphasis is differently placed on the words. If it be pronounced thus: Do *you* ride to town to-day? the answer may naturally be, No; I send my servant in my stead. If thus; Do you *ride* to town to-day? Answer, No, I intend to walk. Do you ride *to town* to-day? No; I ride out into the fields. Do you ride to town *to-day?* No; but I shall to-morrow. In like manner, in solemn discourse, the whole force and beauty of an expression often depend on the accented word; and we may present to the hearers quite different views of the same sentiment, by placing the emphasis differently. In the following words of our Saviour, observe in what different lights the thought is placed, according as the words are pronounced: 'Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?' *betrayest* thou—makes the reproach turn on the infamy of treachery. Betrayest *thou*—makes it rest, upon Judas's connexion with his Master. Betrayest thou the *Son of Man*—rests it, upon our Saviour's personal character and eminence. Betrayest thou the Son of Man *with a kiss?*—turns it, upon his prostituting the signal of peace and friendship, to the purpose of a mark of destruction.

In order to acquire the proper management of the emphasis, the great rule, and indeed the only rule possible to be given is, that the speaker study to attain a just conception of the force and spirit of those sentiments which he is to pronounce. For to lay the emphasis with exact propriety, is a constant exercise of good sense and attention. It is far from being an inconsiderable attainment. It is one of the greatest trials of a true and just taste; and must arise from feeling delicately ourselves, and from judging accurately, of what is fittest to strike the feelings of others. There is as great a difference between a chapter of the Bible, or any other piece of plain prose, read by one who places the several emphases every where with taste and judgment, and by one who neglects or mistakes them, as there is between the same tune played by the most masterly hand, or by the most bungling performer.

In all prepared discourses, it would be of great use, if they were read over or rehearsed in private, with this particular view, to search for the proper emphases before they were pronounced in public; marking, at the same time, with a pen, the emphatical words in every sentence, or at least in the most weighty and affecting parts, of the discourse, and fixing them well in memory. Were this attention oftener bestowed, were this part of pronunciation studied with more exactness, and not left to the moment of delivery, as is commonly done, public speakers would find their care abundantly repaid, by the remarkable effects which it would produce upon their audience. Let me caution, at the same time, against one error, that of multiplying emphatical words too much. It is only by a prudent reserve in the use of them, that we can

give them any weight. If they recur too often; if a speaker attempts to render every thing which he says of high importance, by a multitude of strong emphases, we soon learn to pay little regard to them. To crowd every sentence with emphatical words, is like crowding all the pages of a book with italic characters, which as to the effect, is just the same with using no such distinctions at all.

Next to emphasis, the pauses in speaking demand attention. These are of two kinds; first, emphatical pauses; and next, such as mark the distinctions of sense. An emphatical pause is made, after something has been said of peculiar moment, and on which we want to fix the hearer's attention. Sometimes before such a thing is said, we usher it in with a pause of this nature. Such pauses have the same effect as a strong emphasis; and are subject to the same rules; especially to the caution just now given, of not repeating them too frequently. For as they excite uncommon attention, and of course raise expectation, if the importance of the matter be not fully answerable to such expectation, they occasion disappointment and disgust.

But the most frequent and the principal use of pauses, is to mark the divisions of the sense, and at the same time to allow the speaker to draw his breath; and the proper and graceful adjustment of such pauses, is one of the most nice and difficult articles in delivery. In all public speaking, the management of the breath requires a good deal of care, so as not to be obliged to divide words from one another, which have so intimate a connexion, that they ought to be pronounced with the same breath, and without the least separation. Many a sentence is miserably mangled, and the force of the emphasis totally lost, by divisions being made in the wrong place. To avoid this, every one, while he is speaking, should be very careful to provide a full supply of breath for what he is to utter. It is a great mistake to imagine, that the breath must be drawn only at the end of a period, when the voice is allowed to fall. It may easily be gathered at the intervals of the period, when the voice is only suspended for a moment; and by this management, one may have always a sufficient stock for carrying on the longest sentence, without improper interruptions.

If any one in public speaking, shall have formed to himself a certain melody or tune, which requires rest and pauses of its own, distinct from those of the sense, he has, undoubtedly, contracted one of the worst habits into which a public speaker can fall. It is the sense which should always rule the pauses of the voice; for wherever there is any sensible suspension of the voice, the hearer is always led to expect somewhat corresponding in the meaning. Pauses, in public discourse, must be formed upon the

manner in which we utter ourselves in ordinary, sensible conversation; and not upon the stiff artificial manner which we acquire, from reading books according to the common punctuation. The general run of punctuation is very arbitrary; often capricious and false; and dictates a uniformity of tone in the pauses, which is extremely disagreeable; for we are to observe, that to render pauses graceful and expressive, they must not only be made in the right place, but also be accompanied with a proper tone of voice, by which the nature of these pauses is intimated; much more than by the length of them, which can never be exactly measured. Sometimes it is only a slight and simple suspension of voice that is proper; sometimes a degree of cadence in the voice is required; and sometimes that peculiar tone and cadence, which denote the sentence finished. In all these cases, we are to regulate ourselves, by attending to the manner in which nature teaches us to speak, when engaged in real and earnest discourse with others.

When we are reading or reciting verse, there is a peculiar difficulty in making the pauses justly. The difficulty arises from the melody of verse, which dictates to the ear pauses or rests of its own; and to adjust and compound these properly with the pauses of the sense, so as neither to hurt the ear, nor offend the understanding, is so very nice a matter, that it is no wonder we so seldom meet with good readers of poetry. There are two kinds of pauses that belong to the music of verse; one is, the pause at the end of the line; and the other, the cæsural pause in the middle of it. With regard to the pause at the end of the line, which marks that strain or verse to be finished, rhyme renders this always sensible, and in some measure compels us to observe it in our pronunciation. In blank verse, where there is a greater liberty permitted of running the lines into one another, sometimes without any suspension in the sense, it has been made a question, Whether in reading such verse with propriety, any regard at all should be paid to the close of a line? On the stage, where the appearance of speaking in verse should always be avoided, there can, I think, be no doubt, that the close of such lines as make no pause in the sense, should not be rendered perceptible to the ear. But on other occasions, this were improper: for what is the use of melody, or for what end has the poet composed in verse, if, in reading his lines, we suppress his numbers; and degrade them, by our pronunciation, into mere prose? We ought, therefore, certainly to read blank verse so as to make every line sensible to the ear. At the same time, in doing so, every appearance of sing-song and tone must be carefully guarded against. The close of the line where it makes no pause in the meaning, ought to be marked not by such a tone as is used in finishing a sentence; but without either letting the voice fall, or elevating it, it should be marked

only by such a slight suspension of sound, as may distinguish the passage from one line to another without injuring the meaning.

The other kind of musical pause, is that which falls somewhere about the middle of the verse, and divides it into two hemistichs; a pause, not so great as that which belongs to the close of the line, but still sensible to an ordinary ear. This, which is called the cæsural pause, in the French heroic verse falls uniformly in the middle of the line. In the English, it may fall after the 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th syllables in the line, and no other. Where the verse is so constructed, that the cæsural pause coincides with the slightest pause or division in the sense, the line can be read easily; as in the two first verses of Mr. Pope's Messiah:

> Ye nymphs of Solyma! begin the song;
> To heavenly themes, sublimer strains belong.

But if it shall happen that words, which have such a strict and intimate connexion as not to bear even a momentary separation, are divided from one another by this cæsural pause, we then feel a sort of struggle between the sense and the sound, which renders it difficult to read such lines gracefully. The rule of proper pronunciation in such cases is, to regard only the pause which the sense forms; and to read the line accordingly. The neglect of the cæsural pause may make the line sound somewhat unharmoniously; but the effect would be much worse, if the sense were sacrificed to the sound. For instance, in the following line of Milton:

> ———— What in me is dark,
> Illumine; what is low, raise and support—

The sense clearly dictates the pause after 'illumine,' at the end of the third syllable, which, in reading, ought to be made accordingly; though, if the melody only were to be regarded, 'illumine' should be connected with what follows, and the pause not made till the 4th or 6th syllable. So, in the following line of Mr. Pope's (Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot):

> I sit, with sad civility I read—

The ear plainly points out the cæsural pause as falling after 'sad,' the 4th syllable. But it would be very bad reading to make any pause there, so as to separate 'sad' and 'civility.' The sense admits of no other pause than after the second syllable 'sit,' which therefore must be the only pause made in the reading.

I proceed to treat next of tones in pronunciation, which are different both from emphasis and pauses; consisting in the modulation of the voice, the notes or variations of sound which we employ in public speaking. How much of the propriety, the force and grace of discourse, must depend on these, will appear from this single consideration; that to almost every sentiment we utter, more especially to every strong emotion, nature hath adapted some

peculiar tone of voice; insomuch, that he who should tell another that he was very angry, or much grieved, in a tone which did not suit such emotions, instead of being believed, would be laughed at. Sympathy is one of the most powerful principles by which persuasive discourse works its effect. The speaker endeavours to transfuse into his hearers his own sentiments and emotions; which he can never be successful in doing, unless he utters them in such a manner as to convince the hearers that he feels them.* The proper expression of tones, therefore, deserves to be attentively studied by every one who would be a successful orator.

The greatest and most material instruction which can be given for this purpose is, to form the tones of public speaking upon the tones of sensible and animated conversation. We may observe, that every man, when he is much in earnest in common discourse, when he is engaged in speaking on some subject which interests him nearly, has an eloquent or persuasive tone and manner. What is the reason of our being often so frigid and unpersuasive in public discourse, but our departing from the natural tone of speaking, and delivering ourselves in an affected artificial manner? Nothing can be more absurd than to imagine, that as soon as one mounts a pulpit, or rises in a public assembly, he is instantly to lay aside the voice with which he expresses himself in private; to assume a new, studied tone, and a cadence altogether foreign to his natural manner. This has vitiated all delivery; this has given rise to cant and tedious monotony, in the different kinds of modern public speaking, especially in the pulpit. Men departed from nature; and sought to give a beauty or force, as they imagined, to their discourse, by substituting certain studied musical tones, in the room of the genuine expressions of sentiment, which the voice carries in natural discourse. Let every public speaker guard against this error. Whether he speak in a private room, or in a great assembly, let him remember that he still speaks. Follow nature; consider how she teaches you to utter any sentiment or feeling of your heart. Imagine a subject or debate started in conversation among grave and wise men, and yourself bearing a share in it. Think after what manner, with what tones and inflexions of voice, you would on such an occasion express yourself, when

* 'All that passes in the mind of man may be reduced to two classes, which I call Ideas and Emotions. By ideas, I mean all thoughts which rise and pass in succession in the mind. By emotions, all exertions of the mind in arranging, combining, and separating its ideas; as well as all the effects produced on the mind itself by those ideas, from the more violent agitation of the passions, to the calmer feelings produced by the operation of the intellect and the fancy. In short, thought is the object of the one, internal feeling of the other. That which serves to express the former, I call the language of ideas; and the latter, the language of emotions. Words are the signs of the one, tones of the other. Without the use of these two sorts of language, it is impossible to communicate through the ear all that passes in the mind of man.' SHERIDAN on the Art of Reading.

you were most in earnest, and sought most to be listened to. Carry these with you to the bar, to the pulpit, or to any public assembly; let these be the foundation of your manner of pronouncing there; and you will take the surest method of rendering your delivery both agreeable and persuasive.

I have said, Let these conversation tones be the *foundation* of public pronunciation; for, on some occasions, solemn public speaking requires them to be exalted beyond the strain of common discourse. In a formal studied oration, the elevation of the style, and the harmony of the sentences, prompt, almost necessarily, a modulation of voice more rounded, and bordering more upon music, than conversation admits. This gives rise to what is called the declaiming manner. But though this mode of pronunciation runs considerably beyond ordinary discourse, yet still it must have for its basis, the natural tones of grave and dignified conversation. I must observe, at the same time, that the constant indulgence of a declamatory manner is not favourable either to a good composition, or good delivery; and is in hazard of betraying public speakers into that monotony of tone and cadence, which is so generally complained of. Whereas, he who forms the general run of his delivery upon a speaking manner, is not likely ever to become disagreeable through monotony. He will have the same natural variety in his tones, which a person has in conversation. Indeed, the perfection of delivery requires both these different manners, that of speaking with liveliness and ease, and that of declaiming with stateliness and dignity, to be possessed by one man; and to be employed by him, according as the different parts of his discourse require either the one or the other. This is a perfection which is not attained by many; the greatest part of public speakers allowing their delivery to be formed altogether accidentally; according as some turn of voice appears to them most beautiful, or some artificial model has caught their fancy; and acquiring, by this means, a habit of pronunciation, which they can never vary. But the capital direction, which ought never to be forgotten, is, to copy the proper tones for expressing every sentiment from those which nature dictates to us, in conversation with others; to speak always with her voice; and not to form to ourselves a fantastic public manner, from an absurd fancy of its being more beautiful than a natural one.*

* 'Loquere,' (says an author of the last century, who has written a treatise in verse, de Gestu et Voce Oratoris,)

——— Loquere; hoc vitium commune, loquatur
Ut nemo; at tensâ declamitet omnia voce.
Tu loquere, ut mos est hominum; boat et latrat ille;
Ille ululat; rudit hic; (fari si talia dignum est)
Non hominem vox ulla sonat ratione loquentem.'

JOANNES LUCAS, de Gestu et Voce, lib. ii. Paris, 1675.

It now remains to treat of gesture, or what is called action in public discourse. Some nations animate their words in common conversation, with many more motions of the body than others do. The French and the Italians are, in this respect, much more sprightly than we. But there is no nation, hardly any person, so phlegmatic, as not to accompany their words with some actions and gesticulations, on all occasions, when they are much in earnest. It is therefore unnatural in a public speaker, it is inconsistent with that earnestness and seriousness which he ought to shew in all affairs of moment, to remain quite unmoved in his outward appearance, and to let the words drop from his mouth, without any expression of meaning or warmth in his gesture.

The fundamental rule as to propriety of action, is undoubtedly the same with what I gave as to propriety of tone. Attend to the looks and gestures, in which earnestness, indignation, compassion, or any other emotion, discovers itself to most advantage in the common intercourse of men; and let these be your model. Some of these looks and gestures are common to all men; and there are also certain peculiarities of manner which distinguish every individual. A public speaker must take that manner which is most natural to himself. For it is here, just as in tones. It is not the business of a speaker to form to himself a certain set of motions and gestures, which he thinks most becoming and agreeable, and to practise these in public, without their having any correspondence to the manner which is natural to him in private. His gestures and motions ought all to carry that kind of expression which nature has dictated to him; and unless this be the case, it is impossible, by means of any study, to avoid their appearing stiff and forced.

However, although nature must be the ground-work, I admit that there is room in this matter for some study and art. For many persons are naturally ungraceful in the motions which they make; and this ungracefulness might, in part at least, be reformed by application and care. The study of action in public speaking, consists chiefly in guarding against awkward and disagreeable motions, and in learning to perform such as are natural to the speaker, in the most becoming manner. For this end it has been advised by writers on this subject, to practise before a mirror, where one may see and judge of his own gestures. But I am afraid persons are not always the best judges of the gracefulness of their own motions; and one may declaim long enough before a mirror, without correcting any of his faults. The judgment of a friend, whose good taste they can trust, will be found of much greater advantage to beginners, than any mirror they can use. With regard to particular rules concerning action and gesticulation, Quinctilian has delivered a great many, in the last chapter of the 11th book of his Institutions; and all the modern writers on this subject have done

little else but translate them. I am not of opinion that such rules, delivered either by the voice or on paper, can be of much unless persons saw them exemplified before their eyes.*

I shall only add farther, on this head, that in order to succeed well in delivery, nothing is more necessary than for a speaker to guard against a certain flutter of spirits, which is peculiarly incident to those who begin to speak in public. He must endeavour above all things to be recollected, and master of himself. For this end, he will find nothing of more use to him than to study to become wholly engaged in his subject; to be possessed with a sense of its importance or seriousness; to be concerned much more to persuade than to please. He will generally please most, when pleasing is not his sole nor chief aim. This is the only rational and proper method of raising one's self above that timid and bashful regard to an audience, which is so ready to disconcert a speaker, both as to what he is to say, and as to his manner of saying it.

I cannot conclude without an earnest admonition to guard against all affectation, which is the certain ruin of good delivery. Let your manner, whatever it is, be your own; neither imitated from another, nor assumed upon some imaginary model, which is unnatural to you. Whatever is native, even though accompanied with several defects, yet is likely to please; because it shews us a man; because it has the appearance of coming from the heart. Whereas a delivery, attended with several acquired graces and beauties, if it be not easy and free, if it betray the marks of art and affectation, never fails to disgust. To attain any extremely

* The few following hints only I shall adventure to throw out, in case they may be of any service. When speaking in public, one should study to preserve as much dignity as possible, in the whole attitude of the body. An erect posture is generally to be chosen; standing firm, so as to have the fullest and freest command of all his motions; any inclination which is used should be forwards towards the hearers, which is a natural expression of earnestness. As for the countenance, the chief rule is, that it should correspond with the nature of the discourse, and when no particular emotion is expressed, a serious and manly look is always the best. The eyes should never be fixed close on any one object, but move easily round the audience. In the motions made with the hands, consists the chief part of gesture in speaking. The ancients condemned all motions performed by the left hand alone; but I am not sensible that these are always offensive, though it is natural for the right hand to be more frequently employed. Warm emotions demand the motion of both hands corresponding together. But whether one gesticulates with one or with both hands, it is an important rule, that all his motions should be free and easy. Narrow and straitened movements are generally ungraceful; for which reason, motions made with the hands are directed to proceed from the shoulder rather than from the elbow. Perpendicular movements too with the hands, that is, in the straight line up and down, which Shakspeare, in Hamlet, calls 'sawing the air with the hand,' are seldom good. Oblique motions are, in general, the most graceful. Too sudden and nimble motions should be likewise avoided. Earnestness can be fully expressed without them. Shakspeare's directions on this head are full of good sense; 'use all gently,' says he; 'and in the very torrent and tempest of passion, acquire a temperance that may give it smoothness.'

correct and perfectly graceful delivery, is what few can expect; so many natural talents being requisite to concur in forming it. But to attain, what as to the effect is very little inferior, a forcible and persuasive manner, is within the power of most persons; if they will only unlearn false and corrupt habits; if they will allow themselves to follow nature, and will speak in public as they do in private, when they speak in earnest and from the heart. If one has naturally any gross defects in his voice or gestures, he begins at the wrong end, if he attempts at reforming them only when he is to speak in public. He should begin with rectifying them in his private manner of speaking; and then carry to the public the right habit he has formed. For, when a speaker is engaged in a public discourse, he should not be then employing his attention about his manner, or thinking of his tones and his gestures. If he be so employed, study and affectation will appear. He ought to be then quite in earnest; wholly occupied with his subject and his sentiments; leaving nature, and previously formed habits, to prompt and suggest his manner of delivery.

LECTURE XXXIV.

MEANS OF IMPROVING IN ELOQUENCE.

I HAVE now treated fully of the different kinds of public speaking, of the composition, and of the delivery of a discourse. Before I finish this subject, it may be of use to suggest some things concerning the properest means of improvement in the art of public speaking, and the most necessary studies for that purpose.

To be an eloquent speaker, in the proper sense of the word, is far from being either a common or an easy attainment. Indeed, to compose a florid harangue on some popular topic, and to deliver it so as to amuse an audience, is a matter not very difficult. But though some praise be due to this, yet the idea which I have endeavoured to give of eloquence, is much higher. It is a great exertion of the human powers. It is the art of being persuasive and commanding; the art, not of pleasing the fancy merely; but of speaking both to the understanding and to the heart; of interesting the hearers in such a degree, as to seize and carry them along with us; and to leave them with a deep and strong impression of what they have heard. How many talents, natural and acquired, must concur for carrying this to perfection? A strong, lively, and warm imagination; quick sensibility of heart, joined with solid judgment, good sense, and presence of mind; all improved by great and long attention to style and composition; and sup-

ported also by the exterior, yet important qualifications, of a graceful manner, a presence not ungainly, and a full and tunable voice. How little reason to wonder, that a perfect and accomplished orator should be one of the characters that is most rarely to be found?

Let us not despair, however. Between mediocrity and perfection, there is a very wide interval. There are many intermediate spaces, which may be filled up with honour; and the more rare and difficult that complete perfection is, the greater is the honour of approaching to it, though we do not fully attain it. The number of orators who stand in the highest class is, perhaps, smaller than the number of poets who are foremost in poetic fame; but the study of oratory has this advantage above that of poetry, that, in poetry, one must be an eminently good performer, or he is not supportable:

——Mediocribus esse Poëtis
Non homines, non Di, non concessêre columnæ.*

In eloquence this does not hold. There, one may possess a moderate station with dignity. Eloquence admits of a great many different forms; plain and simple, as well as high and pathetic; and a genius that cannot reach the latter, may shine with much reputation and usefulness in the former.

Whether nature or art contribute most to form an orator, is a trifling inquiry. In all attainments whatever, nature must be the prime agent. She must bestow the original talents. She must sow the seeds; but culture is requisite for bringing these seeds to perfection. Nature must always have done somewhat; but a great deal will always be left to be done by art. This is certain, that study and discipline are more necessary for the improvement of natural genius in oratory, than they are in poetry. What I mean is, that though poetry be capable of receiving assistance from critical art, yet a poet, without any aid from art, by the force of genius alone, can rise higher than a public speaker can do, who has never given attention to the rules of style, composition, and delivery. Homer formed himself; Demosthenes and Cicero were formed by the help of much labour, and of many assistances derived from the labour of others. After these preliminary observations, let us proceed to the main design of this Lecture; to treat of the means to be used for improvement in eloquence.

In the first place, What stands highest in the order of means, is personal character and disposition. In order to be a truly eloquent or persuasive speaker, nothing is more necessary than to be a virtuous man. This was a favourite position among the ancient rhetoricians: 'Non posse Oratorem esse nisi virum bonum.' To find any such connexion between virtue and one of the highest

* For God and man, and letter'd post denies,
That poets ever are of middling size.—FRANCIS.

liberal arts, must give pleasure; and it can, I think, be clearly shewn, that this is not a mere topic of declamation, but that the connexion here alleged, is undoubtedly founded in truth and reason.

For, consider first, Whether any thing contribute more to persuasion, than the opinion which we entertain of the probity, disinterestedness, candour, and other good moral qualities of the person who endeavours to persuade? These give weight and force to every thing which he utters, nay, they add a beauty to it; they dispose us to listen with attention and pleasure; and create a secret partiality in favour of that side which he espouses. Whereas, if we entertain a suspicion of craft and disingenuity, of a corrupt, or a base mind, in the speaker, his eloquence loses all its real effect. It may entertain and amuse; but it is viewed as artifice, as trick, as the play only of speech; and, viewed in this light, whom can it persuade? We even read a book with more pleasure, when we think favourably of its author; but when we have the living speaker before our eyes, addressing us personally on some subject of importance, the opinion we entertain of his character must have a much more powerful effect.

But, lest it should be said, that this relates only to the character of virtue, which one may maintain, without being at bottom a truly worthy man, I must observe farther, that besides the weight which it adds to character, real virtue operates also, in other ways, to the advantage of eloquence.

First, nothing is so favourable as virtue to the prosecution of honourable studies. It prompts a generous emulation to excel; it inures to industry; it leaves the mind vacant and free, master of itself, disencumbered of those bad passions, and disengaged from those mean pursuits, which have ever been found the greatest enemies to true proficiency. Quinctilian has touched this consideration very properly: 'Quod si agrorum nimia cura, et sollicitior rei familiaris diligentia, et venandi voluptas, et dati spectaculis dies, multum studiis auferunt, quid putamus facturas cupiditatem, avaritiam, invidiam? Nihil enim est tam occupatum, tam multiforme, tot ac tam variis affectibus concisum, atque laceratum, quam mala ac improba mens. Quis inter hæc, literis, aut ulli bonæ arti, locus? Non hercle magis quam frugibus, in terrâ sentibus ac rubis occupatâ.'*

* 'If the management of an estate, if anxious attention to domestic economy, a passion for hunting, or whole days given up to public places of amusements, consume so much time that is due to study, how much greater waste must be occasioned by licentious desires, avarice, or envy? Nothing is so much hurried and agitated, so contradictory to itself, or so violently torn and shattered by conflicting passions, as a bad heart. Amidst the distractions which it produces, what room is left for the cultivation of letters, or the pursuit of any honourable art? No more, assuredly, than there is for the growth of corn in a field that is overrun with thorns and brambles.'

But, besides this consideration, there is another of still higher importance, though I am not sure of its being attended to as much as it deserves; namely, that from the fountain of real and genuine virtue, are drawn those sentiments which will ever be most powerful in affecting the hearts of others. Bad as the world is, nothing has so great and universal a command over the minds of men as virtue. No kind of language is so generally understood, and so powerfully felt, as the native language of worthy and virtuous feelings. He only, therefore, who possesses these full and strong, can speak properly, and in its own language, to the heart. On all great subjects and occasions, there is a dignity, there is an energy, in noble sentiments, which is overcoming and irresistible. They give an ardour and a flame to one's discourse, which seldom fails to kindle a like flame in those who hear; and which, more than any other cause, bestows on eloquence that power, for which it is famed, of seizing and transporting an audience. Here, art and imitation will not avail. An assumed character conveys nothing of this powerful warmth. It is only a native and unaffected glow of feeling, which can transmit the emotion to others. Hence, the most renowned orators, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, were no less distinguished for some of the high virtues, as public spirit and zeal for their country, than for eloquence. Beyond doubt, to these virtues their eloquence owed much of its effect; and those orations of theirs, in which there breathes most of the virtuous and magnanimous spirit, are those which have most attracted the admiration of ages.

Nothing, therefore, is more necessary for those who would excel in any of the higher kinds of oratory, than to cultivate habits of the several virtues, and to refine and improve all their moral feelings. Whenever these become dead, or callous, they may be assured, that, on every great occasion, they will speak with less power, and less success. The sentiments and dispositions particularly requisite for them to cultivate, are the following: the love of justice and order, and indignation at insolence and oppression; the love of honesty and truth, and detestation of fraud, meanness, and corruption; magnanimity of spirit; the love of liberty, of their country, and the public; zeal for all great and noble designs, and reverence for all worthy and heroic characters. A cold and sceptical turn of mind is extremely adverse to eloquence; and no less so, is that cavilling disposition which takes pleasure in depreciating what is great, and ridiculing what is generally admired. Such a disposition bespeaks one not very likely to excel in any thing; but least of all in oratory. A true orator should be a person of generous sentiments, of warm feelings, and of a mind turned towards the admiration of all those great and high objects, which mankind are naturally formed to admire. Joined with the manly

virtues, he should, at the same time, possess strong and tender sensibility to all the injuries, distresses, and sorrows of his fellow-creatures; a heart that can easily relent; that can readily enter into the circumstances of others, and can make their case his own. A proper mixture of courage and of modesty, must also be studied by every public speaker. Modesty is essential; it is always, and justly, supposed to be a concomitant of merit; and every appearance of it is winning and prepossessing. But modesty ought not to run into excessive timidity. Every public speaker should be able to rest somewhat on himself; and to assume that air, not of self-complacency, but of firmness, which bespeaks a consciousness of his being thoroughly persuaded of the truth, or justice, of what he delivers; a circumstance of no small consequence for making impression on those who hear.

Next to moral qualifications, what, in the second place, is most necessary to an orator, is a fund of knowledge. Much is this inculcated by Cicero and Quinctilian: 'Quod omnibus disciplinis et artibus debet esse instructus orator.' By which they mean, that he ought to have, what we call, a liberal education; and to be formed by a regular study of philosophy, and the polite arts. We must never forget that,

Scribendi recte, sapere est et principium et fons.

Good sense and knowledge are the foundation of all good speaking. There is no art that can teach one to be eloquent, in any sphere, without a sufficient acquaintance with what belongs to that sphere; or if there were an art that made such pretensions, it would be mere quackery, like the pretensions of the Sophists of old, to teach their disciples to speak for and against every subject; and would be deservedly exploded by all wise men. Attention to style, to composition, and all the arts of speech, can only assist an orator in setting off, to advantage, the stock of materials which he possesses; but the stock, the materials themselves, must be brought from other quarters than from rhetoric. He who is to plead at the bar, must make himself thoroughly master of the knowledge of the law; of all the learning and experience that can be useful in his profession, for supporting a cause, or convincing a judge. He who is to speak from the pulpit, must apply himself closely to the study of divinity, of practical religion, of morals, of human nature; that he may be rich in all the topics, both of instruction and of persuasion. He who would fit himself for being a member of the supreme council of the nation, or of any public assembly, must be thoroughly acquainted with the business that belongs to such assembly; he must study the forms of court, the course of procedure; and must attend minutely to all the facts that may be the subject of question or deliberation.

Besides the knowledge that properly belongs to his profession, a public speaker, if ever he expects to be eminent, must make himself acquainted, as far as his necessary occupations allow, with the general circle of polite literature. The study of poetry may be useful to him, on many occasions, for embellishing his style, for suggesting lively images, or agreeable allusions. The study of history may be still more useful to him; as the knowledge of facts, of eminent characters, and of the course of human affairs, finds place on many occasions.* There are few great occasions of public speaking, in which one may not derive assistance from cultivated taste, and extensive knowledge; they will often yield him materials for proper ornament; sometimes, for argument and real use. A deficiency of knowledge, even in subjects that belong not directly to his own profession, will expose him to many disadvantages, and give better qualified rivals a great superiority over him.

Allow me to recommend in the third place, not only the attainment of useful knowledge, but a habit of application and industry. Without this, it is impossible to excel in any thing. We must not imagine, that it is by a sort of mushroom growth, that one can rise to be a distinguished pleader, or preacher, or speaker in any assembly. It is not by starts of application, or by a few years' preparation of study afterward discontinued, that eminence can be attained. No; it can be attained only by means of regular industry, grown up into a habit, and ready to be exerted on every occasion that calls for industry. This is the fixed law of our nature; and he must have a very high opinion of his own genius indeed, that can believe himself an exception to it. A very wise law of our nature it is; for industry is, in truth, the great 'Condimentum,' the seasoning of every pleasure; without which life is doomed to languish. Nothing is so great an enemy both to honourable attainments, and to the real, to the brisk, and spirited enjoyments of life, as that relaxed state of mind which arises from indolence and dissipation. One that is destined to excel in any art, especially in the arts of speaking and writing, will be known by this more than by any other mark whatever, an enthusiasm for that art; an enthusiasm, which, firing his mind with the object he has in view, will dispose him to relish every labour which the means require. It was this, that characterized the great men of antiquity; it is this, which must distinguish the moderns who would tread in their steps. This honourable enthusiasm, it is highly necessary for such as are studying oratory to cultivate. If youth wants it, manhood will flag miserably.

* 'Imprimis verò abundare debet orator exemplorum copiâ, cum veterum, tum etiam novorum; adeo ut non modo quæ conscripta sunt historiis, aut Sermonibus velut per manus tradita, quæque quotidie aguntur, debeat nôsse; verùm ne ea quidem quæ a clarioribus poëtis sunt ficta negligere.' QUINCT. l. xii. cap. 4.

In the fourth place, attention to the best models will contribute greatly towards improvement. Every one who speaks or writes, should indeed endeavour to have somewhat that is his own, that is peculiar to himself, and that characterizes his composition and style. Slavish imitation depresses genius, or rather betrays the want of it. But withal, there is no genius so original, but may be profited and assisted by the aid of proper examples, in style, composition, and delivery. They always open some new ideas; they serve to enlarge and correct our own. They quicken the current of thought, and excite emulation.

Much, indeed, will depend upon the right choice of models which we propose to imitate; and supposing them rightly chosen, a farther care is requisite, of not being seduced by a blind universal admiration. For, 'decipit exemplar, vitiis imitabile.' Even in the most finished models we can select, it must not be forgotten, that there are always some things improper for imitation. We should study to acquire a just conception of the peculiar characteristic beauties of any writer, or public speaker, and imitate these only. One ought never to attach himself too closely to any single model; for he who does so, is almost sure of being seduced into a faulty and affected imitation. His business should be, to draw from several the proper ideas of perfection. Living examples of public speaking, in any kind, it will not be expected that I should here point out. As to the writers, ancient and modern, from whom benefit may be derived in forming composition and style, I have spoken so much of them in former Lectures, that it is needless to repeat what I have said of their virtues and defects. I own, it is to be regretted, that the English language, in which there is much good writing, furnishes us, however, with but very few recorded examples of eloquent public speaking. Among the French there are more. Saurin, Bourdaloue, Flechier, Massillon, particularly the last, are eminent for the eloquence of the pulpit. But the most nervous and sublime of all their orators is Bossuet, the famous Bishop of Meaux; in whose *Oraisons Funebres*, there is a very high spirit of oratory.* Some of Fontenelle's Harangues to the French Academy, are elegant and agreeable. And at the bar, the printed pleadings of Cochin and D'Aguesseau, are highly extolled by the late French critics.

There is one observation, which it is of importance to make, concerning imitation of the style of any favourite author, when we

* The criticism which M. Crévier, author of Rhétorique Françoise, passes upon these writers whom I have above named, is, 'Bossuet est grand, mais inegal; Flechier est plus égal, mais moins élevé, et souvent trop fleuri: Bourdaloue est solide et judicieux, mais il néglige les graces légères: Massillon est plus riche en images, mais moins fort en raisonnement. Je souhaite donc, que l'orateur ne se contente dans l'imitation d'un seul de ces modèles, mais qu'il tâche de réunir en lui toutes leurs differentes vertus.' Vol. ii. chap. derniere.

would carry his style into public speaking. We must attend to a very material distinction between written and spoken language. These are, in truth, two different manners of communicating ideas. A book that is to be read, requires one sort of style; a man that is to speak, must use another. In books, we look for correctness, precision, all redundancies pruned, all repetitions avoided, language completely polished. Speaking admits a more easy, copious style, and less fettered by rule; repetitions may often be necessary, parentheses may sometimes be graceful; the same thought must often be placed in different views; as the hearers can catch it only from the mouth of the speaker, and have not the advantage, as in reading a book, of turning back again, and of dwelling on what they do not fully comprehend. Hence the style of many good authors would appear stiff, affected, and even obscure, if, by too close an imitation, we should transfer it to a popular oration. How awkward, for example, would Lord Shaftesbury's sentences sound in the mouth of a public speaker? Some kinds of public discourse, it is true, such as that of the pulpit, where more exact preparation and more studied style are admitted, would bear such a manner better than others which are expected to approach more to extemporaneous speaking. But still there is, in general, so much difference between speaking, and composition designed only to be read, as should guard us against a close and injudicious imitation.

Some authors there are, whose manner of writing approaches nearer to the style of speaking than others; and who, therefore, can be imitated with more safety. In this class, among the English authors, are Dean Swift and Lord Bolingbroke. The Dean, throughout all his writings, in the midst of much correctness, maintains the easy natural manner of an unaffected speaker; and this is one of his chief excellences. Lord Bolingbroke's style is more splendid, and more declamatory than Dean Swift's; but still it is the style of one who speaks, or rather who harangues. Indeed, all his political writings (for it is to them only and not to his philosophical ones, that this observation can be applied) carry much more the appearance of one declaiming with warmth in a great assembly, than of one writing in a closet, in order to be read by others. They have all the copiousness, the fervour, the inculcating method that is allowable and graceful in an orator; perhaps too much of it for a writer; and it is to be regretted, as I have formerly observed, that the matter contained in them should have been so trivial, or so false: for, from the manner and style, considerable advantage might be reaped.

In the fifth place, besides attention to the best models, frequent exercise both in composing and speaking, will be admitted to be a necessary mean of improvement. That sort of composition is, doubtless, most useful, which relates to the profession, or kind of

public speaking, to which persons addict themselves. This they should keep ever in their eye, and be gradually inuring themselves to it. But let me also advise them, not to allow themselves in negligent composition of any kind. He who has it for his aim to write, or to speak correctly, should, in the most trivial kind of composition, in writing a letter, nay, even in common discourse, study to acquit himself with propriety. I do not at all mean, that he is never to write or to speak a word, but in elaborate and artificial language. This would form him to a stiffness and affectation, worse, by ten thousand degrees, than the greatest negligence. But it is to be observed, that there is, in every thing, a manner which is becoming, and has propriety; and opposite to it, there is a clumsy and faulty performance of the same thing. The becoming manner is very often the most light, and seemingly careless manner: but it requires taste and attention to seize the just idea of it. That idea, when acquired, we should keep in our eye, and form upon it whatever we write or say.

Exercises of speaking have always been recommended to students, in order that they may prepare themselves for speaking in public, and on real business. The meetings, or societies, into which they sometimes form themselves for this purpose, are laudable institutions; and, under proper conduct, may serve many valuable purposes. They are favourable to knowledge and study, by giving occasion to inquiries concerning those subjects which are made the ground of discussion. They produce emulation; and gradually inure those who are concerned in them, to somewhat that resembles a public assembly. They accustom them to know their own powers, and to acquire a command of themselves in speaking; and what is, perhaps, the greatest advantage of all, they give them a facility and fluency of expression, and assist them in procuring that 'Copia verborum,' which can be acquired by no other means but frequent exercise in speaking.

But the meetings which I have now in my eye, are to be understood of those academical associations, where a moderate number of young gentlemen, who are carrying on their studies, and are connected by some affinity in the future pursuits which they have in view, assemble privately, in order to improve one another, and to prepare themselves for those public exhibitions which may afterward fall to their lot. As for those public and promiscuous societies, in which multitudes are brought together, who are often of low stations and occupations, who are joined by no common bond of union, except an absurd rage for public speaking, and have no other object in view, but to make a show of their supposed talents, they are institutions not merely of a useless, but of a hurtful nature. They are in great hazard of proving seminaries of licentiousness, petulance, faction, and folly. They mislead those,

who, in their own callings, might be useful members of society, into fantastic plans of making a figure on subjects which divert their attention from their proper business, and are widely remote from their sphere in life.

Even the allowable meetings into which students of oratory form themselves, stand in need of direction in order to render them useful. If their subjects of discourse be improperly chosen; if they maintain extravagant or indecent topics; if they indulge themselves in loose and flimsy declamation, which has no foundation in good sense; or accustom themselves to speak pertly on all subjects without due preparation, they may improve one another in petulance, but in no other thing; and will infallibly form themselves to a very faulty and vicious taste in speaking. I would, therefore, advise all who are members of such societies, in the first place, to attend to the choice of their subjects; that they be useful and manly, either formed on the course of their studies, or on something that has relation to morals and taste, to action and life. In the second place, I would advise them to be temperate in the practice of speaking; not to speak too often, nor on subjects where they are ignorant or unripe; but only when they have proper materials for a discourse, and have digested and thought of the subject beforehand. In the third place, when they do speak, they should study always to keep good sense and persuasion in view, rather than an ostentation of eloquence; and for this end, I would, in the fourth place, repeat the advice which I gave in a former Lecture, that they should always choose that side of the question to which, in their own judgment, they are most inclined, as the right and the true side; and defend it by such arguments as seem to them most solid. By these means they will take the best method of forming themselves gradually to a manly, correct, and persuasive manner of speaking.

It now only remains to inquire, of what use may the study of critical and rhetorical writers be for improving one in the practice of eloquence? These are certainly not to be neglected; and yet, I dare not say that much is to be expected from them. For professed writers on public speaking, we must look chiefly among the ancients. In modern times, for reasons which were before given, popular eloquence, as an art, has never been very much the object of study; it has not the same powerful effects among us that it had in more democratical states; and therefore has not been cultivated with the same care. Among the moderns, though there has been a great deal of good criticism on the different kinds of writing, yet much has not been attempted on the subject of eloquence or public discourse; and what has been given us of that kind, has been drawn mostly from the ancients. Such a writer as Joannes Gerardus Vossius, who has gathered into one heap of

ponderous lumber, all the trifling, as well as the useful things, that are to be found in the Greek and Roman writers, is enough to disgust one with the study of eloquence. Among the French, there has been more attempted on this subject, than among the English. The Bishop of Cambray's writings on eloquence I before mentioned with honour. Rollin, Batteux, Crévier, Gibert, and several other French critics, have also written on cratory; but though some of them may be useful, none of them are so considerable as to deserve particular recommendation.

It is to the original ancient writers that we must chiefly have recourse; and it is a reproach to any one, whose profession calls him to speak in public, to be unacquainted with them. In all the ancient rhetorical writers, there is, indeed, this defect, that they are too systematical, as I formerly shewed; they aim at doing too much; at reducing rhetoric to a complete and perfect art, which may even supply invention with materials on every subject; insomuch, that one would imagine they expected to form an orator by rule, in as mechanical a manner as one would form a carpenter. Whereas, all that can, in truth, be done, is to give openings for assisting and enlightening taste, and for pointing out to genius the course it ought to hold.

Aristotle laid the foundation for all that was afterward written on the subject. That amazing and comprehensive genius, which does honour to human nature, and which gave light into so many different sciences, has investigated the principles of rhetoric with great penetration. Aristotle appears to have been the first who took rhetoric out of the hands of the Sophists, and introduced reasoning and good sense into the art. Some of the profoundest things which have been written on the passions and manners of men, are to be found in his treatise on Rhetoric; though in this, as in all his writings, his great brevity often renders him obscure. Succeeding Greek rhetoricians, most of whom are now lost, improved on the foundation which Aristotle had laid. Two of them still remain, Demetrius Phalereus, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus; both write on the construction of sentences, and deserve to be perused; especially Dionysius, who is a very accurate and judicious critic.

I need scarcely recommend the rhetorical writings of Cicero. Whatever, on the subject of eloquence, comes from so great an orator, must be worthy of attention. His most considerable work on this subject is that 'De Oratore,' in three books. None of Cicero's writings are more highly finished than this treatise. The dialogue is polite; the characters are well supported, and the conduct of the whole is beautiful and agreeable. It is, indeed, full of digressions, and his rules and observations may be thought sometimes too vague and general. Useful things, however, may be

learned from it; and it is no small benefit to be made acquainted with Cicero's own idea of eloquence. The 'Orator ad M. Brutum,' is also a considerable treatise; and, in general, throughout all Cicero's rhetorical works there run those high and sublime ideas of eloquence, which are fitted both for forming a just taste, and for creating that enthusiasm for the art, which is of the greatest consequence for excelling in it.

But of all the ancient writers on the subject of oratory, the most instructive and most useful is Quinctilian. I know few books which abound more with good sense, and discover a greater degree of just and accurate taste, than Quinctilian's Institutions. Almost all the principles of good criticism are to be found in them. He has digested into excellent order all the ancient ideas concerning rhetoric, and is, at the same time, himself an eloquent writer. Though some parts of his work contain too much of the technical and artificial system then in vogue, and for that reason may be thought dry and tedious, yet I would not advise the omitting to read any part of his Institutions To pleaders at the bar, even these technical parts may prove of some use. Seldom has any person, of more sound and distinct judgment than Quinctilian, applied himself to the study of the art of oratory.

LECTURE XXXV.

COMPARATIVE MERIT OF THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS—HISTORICAL WRITING.

I HAVE now finished that part of the course which respected oratory or public speaking, and which, as far as the subject allowed, I have endeavoured to form into some sort of system. It remains, that I enter on the consideration of the most distinguished kinds of composition both in prose and verse, and point out the principles of criticism relating to them. This part of the work might easily be drawn out to a great length; but I am sensible that critical discussions, when they are pursued too far, become both trifling and tedious. I shall study, therefore, to avoid unnecessary prolixity; and hope, at the same time, to omit nothing that is very material under the several heads.

I shall follow the same method here which I have all along pursued, and without which these Lectures could not be entitled to any attention; that is, I shall freely deliver my own opinion on every subject; regarding authority no farther, than as it appears to me founded on good sense and reason. In former Lectures, as I have often quoted several of the ancient classics for their beau-

ties, so I have also, sometimes, pointed out their defects. Hereafter, I shall have occasion to do the same, when treating of their writings under more general heads. It may be fit, therefore, that, before I proceed farther, I make some observations on the comparative merit of the Ancients and the Moderns; in order that we may be able to ascertain, rationally, upon what foundation that deference rests, which has so generally been paid to the ancients. These observations are the more necessary, as this subject has given rise to no small controversy in the republic of letters; and they may, with propriety, be made now, as they will serve to throw light on some things I have afterward to deliver, concerning different kinds of composition.

It is a remarkable phenomenon, and one which has often employed the speculations of curious men, that writers and artists, most distinguished for their parts and genius, have generally appeared in considerable numbers at a time Some ages have been remarkably barren in them; while, at other periods, nature seems to have exerted herself with a more than ordinary effort, and to have poured them forth with a profuse fertility. Various reasons have been assigned for this. Some of the moral causes lie obvious; such as favourable circumstances of government and of manners; encouragement from great men; emulation excited among the men of genius. But as these have been thought inadequate to the whole effect, physical causes have been also assigned; and the Abbé du Bos, in his Reflections on Poetry and Painting, has collected a great many observations on the influence which the air, the climate, and other such natural causes, may be supposed to have upon genius. But whatever the causes be, the fact is certain, that there have been certain periods or ages of the world much more distinguished than others for the extraordinary productions of genius.

Learned men have marked out four of these happy ages. The first is the Grecian age, which commenced near the time of the Peloponnesian war, and extended till the time of Alexander the Great; within which period we have Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Æschines, Lysias, Isocrates, Pindar, Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Menander, Anacreon, Theocritus, Lysippus, Apelles, Phidias, Praxiteles. The second is the Roman age, included nearly within the days of Julius Cæsar and Augustus; affording us Catullus, Lucretius, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid, Phædrus, Cæsar, Cicero, Livy, Sallust, Varro, and Vitruvius. The third age is, that of the restoration of learning, under the Popes Julius II. and Leo X.; when flourished Ariosto, Tasso, Sannazarius, Vida, Machiavel, Guicciardini, Davila, Erasmus, Paul Jovius, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Titian. The fourth comprehends

the age of Louis XIV. and Queen Anne; when flourished in France, Corneille, Racine, De Retz, Moliere, Boileau, Fontaine, Baptiste, Rousseau, Bossuet, Fenelon, Bourdaloue, Pascall, Malebranche, Massillon, Bruyere, Bayle, Fontenelle, Vertot; and in England, Dryden, Pope, Addison, Prior, Swift, Parnell, Arbuthnot, Congreve, Otway, Young, Rowe, Atterbury, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Tillotson, Temple, Boyle, Locke, Newton, Clarke.

When we speak comparatively of the ancients and the moderns, we generally mean by the ancients, such as lived in the two first of those periods, including also one or two who lived more early, as Homer in particular; and by the moderns, those who flourished in the two last of these ages, including also the eminent writers down to our own times. Any comparison between these two classes of writers must necessarily be vague and loose, as they comprehend so many, and of such different kinds and degrees of genius. But the comparison is generally made to turn, by those who are fond of making it, upon two or three of the most distinguished in each class. With much heat it was agitated in France, between Boileau and Mad. Dacier, on the one hand, for the ancients, and Perault and La Motte, on the other, for the moderns; and it was carried to extremes on both sides. To this day, among men of taste and letters, we find a leaning to one or other side. A few reflections may throw light upon the subject, and enable us to discern upon what grounds we are to rest our judgment in this controversy.

If any one, at this day, in the eighteenth century, takes upon him to decry the ancient classics; if he pretends to have discovered that Homer and Virgil are poets of inconsiderable merit, and that Demosthenes and Cicero are not great orators, we may boldly venture to tell such a man, that he is come too late with his discovery. The reputation of such writers is established upon a foundation too solid to be now shaken by any arguments whatever; for it is established upon the almost universal taste of mankind, proved and tried throughout the succession of so many ages. Imperfections in their works he may, indeed, point out; passages that are faulty he may shew; for where is the human work that is perfect? But, if he attempts to discredit their works in general, or to prove that the reputation which they have gained is, on the whole, unjust, there is an argument against him, which is equal to full demonstration. He must be in the wrong; for human nature is against him. In matters of taste, such as poetry and oratory, to whom does the appeal lie? where is the standard; and where the authority of the last decision? where is it to be looked for, but, as I formerly shewed, in those feelings and sentiments that are found, on the most extensive examination, to be the common sen-

timents and feelings of men? These have been fully consulted on this head. The public, the unprejudiced public, has been tried and appealed to for many centuries, and throughout almost all civilized nations. It has pronounced its verdict; it has given its sanction to these writers; and from this tribunal there lies no farther appeal.

In matters of mere reasoning, the world may be long in an error; and may be convinced of the error by stronger reasonings, when produced. Positions that depend upon science, upon knowledge, and matters of fact, may be overturned according as science and knowledge are enlarged, and new matters of fact are brought to light. For this reason, a system of philosophy receives no sufficient sanction from its antiquity, or long currency. The world, as it grows older, may be justly expected to become, if no wiser, at least more knowing; and supposing it doubtful, whether Aristotle or Newton were the greater genius, yet Newton's philosophy may prevail over Aristotle's by means of later discoveries, to which Aristotle was a stranger. But nothing of this kind holds as to matters of taste; which depend not on the progress of knowledge and science, but upon sentiment and feeling. It is in vain to think of undeceiving mankind, with respect to errors committed here, as in philosophy. For the universal feeling of mankind is the natural feeling; and because it is the natural, it is, for that reason, the right feeling. The reputation of the Iliad and the Æneid must therefore stand upon sure ground, because it has stood so long; though that of the Aristotelian or Platonic philosophy, every one is at liberty to call in question.

It is in vain also to allege, that the reputation of the ancient poets and orators is owing to authority, to pedantry, and to the prejudices of education, transmitted from age to age. These, it is true, are the authors put into our hands at schools and colleges, and by that means we have now an early prepossession in their favour; but how came they to gain the possession of colleges and schools? Plainly, by the high fame which these authors had among their own contemporaries. For the Greek and Latin were not always dead languages. There was a time when Homer, and Virgil, and Horace, were viewed in the same light as we now view Dryden, Pope, and Addison. It is not to commentators and universities that the classics are indebted for their fame. They became classics and school-books, in consequence of the high admiration which was paid them by the best judges in their own country and nation. As early as the days of Juvenal, who wrote under the reign of Domitian, we find Virgil and Horace become the standard books in the education of youth.

Quot stabant pueri, cum totus decolor esset
Flaccus, et hæreret nigro fuligo Maroni.*—Sat. 7.

From this general principle, then, of the reputation of the great ancient classics being so early, so lasting, so extensive, among all the most polished nations, we may justly and boldly infer, that their reputation cannot be wholly unjust, but must have a solid foundation in the merit of their writings.

Let us guard, however, against a blind and implicit veneration for the ancients in every thing. I have opened the general principle which must go far in instituting a fair comparison between them and the moderns. Whatever superiority the ancients may have had in point of genius, yet in all arts, where the natural progress of knowledge has had room to produce any considerable effects, the moderns cannot but have some advantage. The world may, in certain respects, be considered as a person who must needs gain somewhat by advancing in years. Its improvements have not, I confess, been always in proportion to the centuries that have passed over it; for, during the course of some ages, it has sunk as into a total lethargy. Yet, when roused from that lethargy, it has generally been able to avail itself, more or less, of former discoveries. At intervals, there arose some happy genius, who could both improve on what had gone before, and invent something new. With the advantage of a proper stock of materials, an inferior genius can make greater progress than a much superior one, to whom these materials are wanting.

Hence, in natural philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, and other sciences that depend on an extensive knowledge and observation of facts, modern philosophers have an unquestionable superiority over the ancient. I am inclined also to think that in matters of pure reasoning, there is more precision among the moderns, than in some instances there was among the ancients; owing perhaps to a more extensive literary intercourse, which has improved and sharpened the faculties of men. In some studies, too, that relate to taste and fine writing, which is our object, the progress of society must, in equity, be admitted to have given us some advantages. For instance, in history, there is certainly more political knowledge in several European nations at present than there was in ancient Greece and Rome. We are better acquainted with the nature of government, because we have seen it under a greater variety of forms and revolutions. The world is more laid open than it was in former times; commerce is greatly enlarged; more countries are civilized; posts are every where established; inter-

* When thou art bound to smell on either hand,
As many stinking lamps as school-boys stand,
When Horace could not read in his own sully'd book,
And Virgil's sacred page was all besmear'd with smoke.—Dryden.

course is become more easy; and the knowledge of facts, by consequence, more attainable. All these are great advantages to historians; of which, in some measure, as I shall afterward shew, they have availed themselves. In the more complex kinds of poetry, likewise, we may have gained somewhat, perhaps, in point of regularity and accuracy. In dramatic performances, having the advantage of the ancient models, we may be allowed to have made some improvements in the variety of the characters, the conduct of the plot, attentions to probability, and to decorums.

These seem to me the chief points of superiority we can plead above the ancients. Neither do they extend as far as might be imagined at first view. For if the strength of genius be on one side, it will go far, in works of taste at least, to counterbalance all the artificial improvements which can be made by greater knowledge and correctness. To return to our comparison of the age of the world with that of a man; it may be said, not altogether without reason, that if the advancing age of the world bring along with it more science and more refinement, there belong, however, to its earlier periods, more vigour, more fire, more enthusiasm of genius. This appears indeed to form the characteristic difference between the ancient poets, orators, and historians, compared with the modern. Among the ancients, we find higher conceptions, greater simplicity, more original fancy. Among the modern's, sometimes more art and correctness, but feebler exertions of genius. But though this be in general a mark of distinction between the ancients and moderns, yet, like all general observations, it must be understood with some exceptions; for, in point of poetical fire and original genius, Milton and Shakspeare are inferior to no poets in any age.

It is proper to observe, that there were some circumstances in ancient times very favourable to those uncommon efforts of genius which were then exerted. Learning was a much more rare and singular attainment in the earlier ages, than it is at present. It was not to schools and universities that the persons applied who sought to distinguish themselves. They had not this easy recourse. They travelled for their improvement into distant countries, to Egypt, and to the East. They inquired after all the monuments of learning there. They conversed with priests, philosophers, poets, with all who had acquired any distinguished fame. They returned to their own country full of the discoveries which they had made, and fired by the new and uncommon objects which they had seen. Their knowledge and improvements cost them more labour, raised in them more enthusiasm, were attended with higher rewards and honours, than in modern days. Fewer had the means and opportunities of distinguishing themselves; but such as did distinguish themselves, were sure of acquiring that fame, and even

veneration, which is, of all rewards, the greatest incentive to genius. Herodotus read his history to all Greece assembled at the Olympic games, and was publicly crowned. In the Peloponnesian war, when the Athenian army was defeated in Sicily, and the prisoners were ordered to be put to death, such of them as could repeat any verses of Euripides were saved, from honour to that poet, who was a citizen of Athens. These were testimonies of public regard, far beyond what modern manners confer upon genius.

In our times, good writing is considered as an attainment, neither so difficult nor so high and meritorious.

Scribimus indocti, doctique, Poëmata passim.*

We write much more supinely, and at our ease, than the ancients. To excel, is become a much less considerable object. Less effort, less exertion is required, because we have many more assistances than they. Printing has rendered all books common, and easy to be had. Education for any of the learned professions can be carried on without much trouble. Hence a mediocrity of genius is spread over all; but to rise beyond that, and to overtop the crowd, is given to few. The multitude of assistances which we have for all kinds of composition, in the opinion of Sir William Temple, a very competent judge, rather depresses than favours the exertions of native genius. 'It is very possible,' says that ingenious author, in his Essay on the Ancients and Moderns, 'that men may lose rather than gain by these; may lessen the force of their own genius, by forming it upon that of others; may have less knowledge of their own, for contenting themselves with that of those before them. So a man that only translates, shall never be a poet: so people that trust to others' charity, rather than their own industry, will be always poor. Who can tell,' he adds, 'whether learning may not even weaken invention, in a man that has great advantages from nature? Whether the weight and number of so many other men's thoughts and notions may not suppress his own; as heaping on wood sometimes suppresses a little spark, that would otherwise have grown into a flame? The strength of mind, as well as of body, grows more from the warmth of exercise, than of clothes; nay, too much of this foreign heat rather makes men faint, and their constitutions weaker than they would be without them.'

From whatever cause it happens, so it is, that among some of the ancient writers, we must look for the highest models in most of the kinds of elegant composition. For accurate thinking and enlarged ideas, in several parts of philosophy, to the moderns we ought chiefly to have recourse. Of correct and finished writing in some works of taste, they may afford useful patterns; but for all

* 'Now every desperate blockhead dares to write,
Verse is the trade of every living wight.'—FRANCIS.

that belongs to original genius, to spirited, masterly, and high execution, our best and most happy ideas are, generally speaking, drawn from the ancients. In epic poetry, for instance, Homer and Virgil, to this day, stand not within many degrees of any rival. Orators, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, we have none. In history, notwithstanding some defects, which I am afterward to mention in the ancient historical plans, it may be safely asserted, that we have no such historical narration, so elegant, so picturesque, so animated and interesting, as that of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Tacitus, and Sallust. Although the conduct of the drama may be admitted to have received some improvements, yet for poetry and sentiment we have nothing to equal Sophocles and Euripides; nor any dialogue in comedy, that comes up to the correct, graceful, and elegant simplicity of Terence. We have no such love elegies as those of Tibullus; no such pastorals as some of Theocritus's: and for lyric poetry, Horace stands quite unrivalled. The name of Horace cannot be mentioned without a particular encomium. That 'Curiosa Felicitas,' which Petronius has remarked in his expressions; the sweetness, elegance, and spirit of many of his Odes, the thorough knowledge of the world, the excellent sentiments, and natural easy manner which distinguish his Satires and Epistles, all contribute to render him one of those very few authors whom one never tires of reading; and from whom alone, were every other monument destroyed, we should be led to form a very high idea of the taste and genius of the Augustan age.

To all such, then, as wish to form their taste, and nourish their genius, let me warmly recommend the assiduous study of the ancient classics, both Greek and Roman:

> Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.*

Without a considerable acquaintance with them, no man can be reckoned a polite scholar, and he will want many assistances for writing and speaking well, which the knowledge of such authors would afford him. Any one has great reason to suspect his own taste, who receives little or no pleasure from the perusal of writings, which so many ages and nations have consented in holding up as objects of admiration. And I am persuaded it will be found, that in proportion as the ancients are generally studied and admired, or are unknown and disregarded in any country, good taste and good composition will flourish or decline. They are commonly none but the ignorant or superficial who undervalue them.

At the same time, a just and high regard for the prime writers of antiquity is to be always distinguished, from that contempt of every thing which is modern, and that blind veneration for all that has been written in Greek or Latin, which belongs only to pedants.

* 'Read them by day, and study them by night.'—FRANCIS.

Among the Greek and Roman authors, some assuredly deserve much higher regard than others; nay, some are of no great value. Even the best of them lie open occasionally to just censure; for to no human performance is it given to be absolutely perfect. We may, we ought therefore to read them with a distinguishing eye, so as to propose for imitation their beauties only; and it is perfectly consistent with just and candid criticism, to find fault with parts, while at the same time, it admires the whole.

After these reflections on the ancients and moderns, I proceed to a critical examination of the most distinguished kinds of composition, and the characters of those writers who have excelled in them whether modern or ancient.

The most general division of the different kinds of composition is, into those written in prose, and those written in verse; which certainly require to be separately considered, because subject to separate laws. I begin, as is most natural, with writings in prose. Of orations, or public discourses of all kinds, I have already treated fully. The remaining species of prose compositions, which assume any such regular form as to fall under the cognizance of criticism, seem to be chiefly these: Historical writing, philosophical writing, epistolary writing, and fictitious history. Historical composition shall be first considered; and, as it is an object of dignity, I propose to treat of it at some length.

As it is the office of an orator to persuade, it is that of an historian to record truth for the instruction of mankind. This is the proper object and end of history, from which may be deduced many of the laws relating to it; and if this object were always kept in view, it would prevent many of the errors into which persons are apt to fall concerning this species of composition. As the primary end of history is to record truth, impartiality, fidelity, and accuracy are the fundamental qualities of an historian. He must neither be a panegyrist nor a satirist. He must not enter into faction, nor give scope to affection; but, contemplating past events and characters with a cool and dispassionate eye, must present to his readers a faithful copy of human nature.

At the same time, it is not every record of facts, however true, that is entitled to the name of history; but such a record as enables us to apply the transactions of former ages for our own instruction. The facts ought to be momentous and important; represented in connexion with their causes; traced to their effects; and unfolded in clear and distinct order. For wisdom is the great end of history. It is designed to supply the want of experience. Though it enforce not its instructions with the same authority, yet it furnishes us with a greater variety of instructions, than it is possible for experience to afford in the course of the longest life. Its object is, to enlarge our views of the human character, and to give

full exercise to our judgment on human affairs. It must not therefore be a tale calculated to please only, and addressed to the fancy. Gravity and dignity are essential characteristics of history; no light ornaments are to be employed, no flippancy of style, no quaintness of wit. But the writer must sustain the character of a wise man, writing for the instruction of posterity; one who has studied to inform himself well, who has pondered his subject with care, and addresses himself to our judgment, rather than to our imagination. At the same time, historical writing is by no means inconsistent with ornamented and spirited narration. It admits of much high ornament and elegance; but the ornaments must be always consistent with dignity; they should not appear to be sought after, but to rise naturally from a mind animated by the events which it records.

Historical composition is understood to comprehend under it, Annals, Memoirs, Lives. But these are its inferior subordinate species, on which I shall hereafter make some reflections, when I shall have first considered what belongs to a regular and legitimate work of history. Such a work is chiefly of two kinds. Either the entire history of some state or kingdom through its different revolutions, such as Livy's Roman History; or the history of some one great event, or some portion or period of time which may be considered as making a whole by itself; such as Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian war, Davila's History of the Civil Wars of France, or Clarendon's of those of England.

In the conduct and management of his subject, the first attention requisite in an historian, is to give it as much unity as possible; that is, his history should not consist of separate unconnected parts merely, but should be bound together by some connecting principle, which shall make the impression on the mind of something that is one, whole and entire. It is inconceivable how great an effect this, when happily executed, has upon a reader, and it is surprising that some able writers of history have not attended to it more. Whether pleasure or instruction be the end sought by the study of history, either of them is enjoyed to much greater advantage, when the mind has always before it the progress of some one great plan or system of actions; when there is some point or centre, to which we can refer the various facts related by the historian.

In general histories, which record the affairs of a whole nation or empire throughout several ages, this unity, I confess, must be more imperfect. Yet even there, some degree of it can be preserved by a skilful writer. For though the whole, taken together, be very complex, yet the great constituent parts of it form so many subordinate wholes, when taken by themselves; each of which can be treated both as complete within itself, and as connected

with what goes before and follows. In the history of a monarchy, for instance, every reign should have its own unity; a beginning, a middle, and an end, to the system of affairs; while, at the same time, we are taught to discern how that system of affairs rose from the preceding, and how it is inserted into what follows. We should be able to trace all the secret links of the chain, which binds together remote and seemingly unconnected events. In some kingdoms of Europe, it was the plan of many successive princes to reduce the power of their nobles; and during several reigns, most of the leading actions had a reference to this end. In other states, the rising power of the commons influenced, for a tract of time, the course and connexion of public affairs. Among the Romans, the leading principle was a gradual extension of conquest, and the attainment of universal empire. The continual increase of their power, advancing towards this end from small beginnings, and by a sort of regular progressive plan, furnished to Livy a happy subject for historical unity, in the midst of a great variety of transactions.

Of all the ancient general historians, the one who had the most exact idea of this quality of historical composition, though in other respects not an elegant writer, is Polybius. This appears from the account he gives of his own plan in the beginning of his third book; observing that the subject of which he had undertaken to write, is, throughout the whole of it, one action, one great spectacle; how, and by what causes, all the parts of the habitable world became subject to the Roman empire. 'This action,' says he, 'is distinct in its beginning, determined in its duration, and clear in its final accomplishment; therefore I think it of use to give a general view beforehand of the chief constituent parts which make up this whole.' In another place he congratulates himself on his good fortune, in having a subject for history, which allowed such variety of parts to be united under one view; remarking, that before this period the affairs of the world were scattered and without connexion; whereas, in the times of which he writes, all the great transactions of the world tended and verged to one point, and were capable of being considered as parts of one system. Whereupon he adds several very judicious observations concerning the usefulness of writing history upon such a comprehensive and connected plan; comparing the imperfect degree of knowledge which is afforded by particular facts without general views, to the imperfect idea which one would entertain of an animal, who had beheld its separate parts only, without having ever seen its entire form and structure.*

* Καθόλυ μὲν γαρ ἔμοιγε δοκοῦσιν οἱ πεπεισμένοι διὰ της κατα μέρος ἱςορίας μετρίως συνόψεσθαι τὰ ὅλα, παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχειν, ὡς ἂν εἴ τινες ἐμψύχυ και καλῦ σώματος γεγονότος διεῤῥιμμένα τα μέρη θεώμενοι, νομίζοιεν ἱκανῶς αὐτόπται γίγνεσθαι της ἐνεργείας αὐτοῦ τε ζώου και καλλονης. εἰ γὰρ τις

Such as write the history of some particular great transaction, as confine themselves to one era, or one portion of the history of a nation, have so great advantages for preserving historical unity, that they are inexcusable if they fail in it. Sallust's Histories of the Catilinarian and Jugurthine wars, Xenophon's Cyropædia, and his Retreat of the Ten Thousand, are instances of particular histories, where the unity of historical object is perfectly well maintained. Thucydides, otherwise a writer of great strength and dignity, has failed much, in this article, in his history of the Peloponnesian war. No one great object is properly pursued, and kept in view; but his narration is cut down into small pieces, his history is divided by summers and winters, and we are every now and then leaving transactions unfinished, and are hurried from place to place, from Athens to Sicily, from thence to Peloponnesus, to Corcyra, to Mitylene, that we may be told of what is going on in all these places. We have a great many disjointed parts, and scattered limbs, which with difficulty we collect into one body; and through this faulty distribution and management of his subject, that judicious historian becomes more tiresome, and less agreeable, than he would otherwise be. For these reasons he is severely censured by one of the best critics of antiquity, Dionysius of Halicarnassus.*

αὐτίκα μάλα συνθεὶς, καὶ τέλειον αὖθις ἀπεργασάμενος τὸ ζῷον τῷ τε εἴδει καὶ τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς εὐπρεπείᾳ, κἄπειτα πάλιν ἐπιδείκνυοι τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις, ταχέως ἂν οἶμαι πάντας αὐτοὺς ὁμολογήσειν, διότι καὶ λίαν πολύ τι τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπελείποντο πρόσθεν, καὶ παραπλήσιοι τοῖς ὀνειρώττουσιν ἦσαν. ἔννοιαν μὲν γὰρ λαβεῖν ἀπὸ μέρους τῶν ὅλων δυνατόν, ἐπιστήμην δὲ καὶ γνώμην ἀτρεκῆ ἔχειν ἀδύνατον. διὸ παντελῶς βραχύ τι νομιστέον συμβάλλεσθαι τὴν κατὰ μέρος ἱστορίαν πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἐμπειρίαν καὶ πίστιν, ἐκ μέντοιγε τῆς ἁπάντων πρὸς ἄλληλα συμπλοκῆς καὶ παραθέσεως, ἔτι δ᾽ ὁμοιότητος καὶ διαφορᾶς, μόνως ἄν τις ἐφίκοιτο καὶ δυνηθείη κατοπτεύσας, ἅμα καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ τὸ τερπνὸν, ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας λαβεῖν.—POLYB. Histor. Prim.

* The censure which Dionysius passes upon Thucydides, is in several articles carried too far. He blames him for the choice of his subject, as not sufficiently splendid and agreeable, and as abounding too much in crimes and melancholy events, on which he observes that Thucydides loves to dwell. He is partial to Herodotus, whom, both for the choice and the conduct of his subject, he prefers to the other historian. It is true, that the subject of Thucydides wants the gaiety and splendour of that of Herodotus; but it is not deficient in dignity. The Peloponnesian war was the contest between two great rival powers, the Athenian and Lacedemonian states, for the empire of Greece. Herodotus loves to dwell on prosperous incidents, and retains somewhat of the amusing manner of the ancient poetical historians. But Herodotus wrote to the imagination, Thucydides writes to the understanding. He was a grave reflecting man, well acquainted with human life; and the melancholy events and catastrophes, which he records, are often both the most interesting parts of history, and the most improving to the heart.

The critic's observations on the faulty distribution which Thucydides makes of his subject, are better founded, and his preference of Herodotus, in this respect, is not unjust—Θουκυδίδης μὲν τοῖς χρόνοις ἀκολουθῶν, Ἡρόδοτος δὲ ταῖς περιοχαῖς τῶν πραγμάτων, γίγνεται Θουκυδίδης ἀσαφὴς καὶ δυσπαρακολούθητος· πολλῶν γὰρ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ θέρος καὶ χειμῶνα γιγνομένων ἐν διαφόροις τόποις, ἡμιτελεῖς τὰς πρώτας πράξεις καταλιπὼν, ἑτέρων ἅπτεται τῶν κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ θέρος καὶ χειμῶνα γιγνομένων· πλανώμεθα δὴ καθάπερ εἰκὸς, καὶ δυσκόλως τοῖς δηλουμένοις παρακολουθοῦμεν. Συνέβηκε Θουκυδίδῃ

The historian must not indeed neglect chronological order, with a view to render his narration agreeable. He must give a distinct account of the dates and of the coincidence of facts. But he is not under the necessity of breaking off always in the middle of transactions, in order to inform us of what was happening elsewhere at the same time. He discovers no art, if he cannot form some connexion among the affairs which he relates, so as to introduce them in a proper train. He will soon tire the reader, if he goes on recording, in strict chronological order, a multitude of separate transactions, connected by nothing else, but their happening at the same time.

Though the history of Herodotus be of greater compass than that of Thucydides, and comprehend a much greater variety of dissimilar parts, he has been more fortunate in joining them together, and digesting them into order. Hence he is a more pleasing writer, and gives a stronger impression of his subject; though, in judgment and accuracy, much inferior to Thucydides. With digressions and episodes he abounds; but when these have any connexion with the main subject, and are inserted professedly as episodes, the unity of the whole is less violated by them, than by a broken and scattered narration of the principal story. Among the moderns, the president Thuanus has, by attempting to make the history of his own times too comprehensive, fallen into the same error, of loading the reader with a great variety of unconnected facts, going on together in different parts of the world; an historian otherwise of great probity, candour, and excellent understanding; but through this want of unity, more tedious, and less interesting, than he would otherwise have been.

LECTURE XXXVI.

HISTORICAL WRITING.

After making some observations on the controversy which has been often carried on concerning the comparative merit of the ancients and the moderns, I entered, in the last Lecture, on the consideration of Historical Writing. The general idea of History is a record of truth for the instruction of mankind. Hence arise the pri-

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μεν, μιαν ὑποθεσιν λαβοντι, πολλα ποιησαι μερη το ἓν σωμα. Ἡροδότῳ δε, τὰς πολλας και ϐδεν εοικυιας ὑποθεσεις προελομενω, συμφωνον εν σωμα πεποιηκεναι. With regard to style, Dionysius gives Thucydides the just praise of energy and brevity; but censures him on many occasions, not without reason, for harsh and obscure expression, deficient in smoothness and ease.

mary qualities required in a good historian, impartiality, fidelity, gravity, and dignity. What I principally considered, was the unity which belongs to this sort of composition; the nature of which I have endeavoured to explain.

I proceed next to observe, that in order to fulfil the end of history, the author must study to trace to their springs the actions and events which he records. Two things are especially necessary for his doing this successfully; a thorough acquaintance with human nature, and political knowledge, or acquaintance with government. The former is necessary to account for the conduct of individuals, and to give just views of their character; the latter to account for the revolutions of government, and the operation of political causes on public affairs. Both must concur, in order to form a completely instructive historian.

With regard to the latter article, political knowledge, the ancient writers wanted some advantages which the moderns enjoy; from whom, upon that account, we have a title to expect more accurate and precise information. The world, as I formerly hinted, was more shut up in ancient times, than it is now; there was then less communication among neighbouring states; and by consequence less knowledge of one another's affairs; no intercourse by established posts, or by ambassadors resident at distant courts. The knowledge and materials of the ancient historians, were thereby more limited and circumscribed; and it is to be observed too, that they wrote for their own countrymen only; they had no idea of writing for the instruction of foreigners, whom they despised, or of the world in general; and hence they are less attentive to convey all that knowledge with regard to domestic policy, which we, in distant times, would desire to have learned from them. Perhaps, also, though in ancient ages men were abundantly animated with the love of liberty, yet the full extent of the influence of government, and of political causes, was not then so thoroughly scrutinized, as it has been in modern times; when a long experience of all the different modes of government has rendered men more enlightened and intelligent, with respect to public affairs.

To these reasons it is owing, that though the ancient historians set before us the particular facts which they relate, in a very distinct and beautiful manner, yet sometimes they do not give us a clear view of all the political causes, which affected the situation of affairs of which they treat. From the Greek historians, we are able to form but an imperfect notion of the strength, the wealth, and the revenues, of the different Grecian states; of the causes of several of those revolutions that happened in their government; or of their separate connexions and interfering interests. In writing the history of the Romans, Livy had surely the most ample field for displaying political knowledge, concerning the rise of their great-

ness, and the advantages or defects of their government. Yet the instruction in these important articles, which he affords, is not considerable. An elegant writer he is, and a beautiful relater of facts, if ever there was one; but by no means distinguished for profoundness or penetration. Sallust, when writing the history of a conspiracy against the government, which ought to have been altogether a political history, has evidently attended more to the elegance of narration, and the painting of characters, than to the unfolding of secret causes and springs. Instead of that complete information, which we would naturally have expected from him, of the state of parties in Rome, and of that particular conjuncture of affairs, which enabled so desperate a profligate as Catiline to become so formidable to government, he has given us little more than a general declamatory account of the luxury and corruption of manners in that age, compared with the simplicity of former times.

I by no means, however, mean to censure all the ancient historians as defective in political information. No historians can be more instructive than Thucydides, Polybius, and Tacitus. Thucydides is grave, intelligent, and judicious; always attentive to give very exact information concerning every operation which he relates; and to shew the advantages or disadvantages of every plan that was proposed and every measure that was pursued. Polybius excels in comprehensive political views, in penetration into great systems, and in his profound and distinct knowledge of all military affairs. Tacitus is eminent for his knowledge of the human heart; is sentimental and refined in a high degree; conveys much instruction with respect to political matters, but more with respect to human nature.

But when we demand from the historian profound and instructive views of his subject, it is not meant that he should be frequently interrupting the course of his history, with his own reflections and speculations. He should give us all the information that is necessary for our fully understanding the affairs which he records. He should make us acquainted with the political constitution, the force, the revenues, the internal state, of the country of which he writes; and with its interests and connexions in respect of neighbouring countries. He should place us, as on an elevated station, whence we may have an extensive prospect of all the causes that co-operate in bringing forward the events which are related. But having put into our hands all the proper materials for judgment, he should not be too prodigal of his own opinions and reasonings. When an historian is much given to dissertation, and is ready to philosophise and speculate on all that he records, a suspicion naturally arises, that he will be in hazard of adapting his narrative of facts to favour some system which he has formed to himself. It

is rather by fair and judicious narration, that history should instruct us, than by delivering instruction in an avowed and direct manner. On some occasions, when doubtful points require to be scrutinized, or when some great event is in agitation, concerning the causes or circumstances of which mankind have been much divided, the narrative may be allowed to stand still for a little; the historian may appear, and may with propriety enter into some weighty discussion. But he must take care not to cloy his readers with such discussions by repeating them too often.

When observations are to be made concerning human nature in general, or the peculiarities of certain characters, if the historian can artfully incorporate such observations with his narrative, they will have a better effect than when they are delivered as formal detached reflections. For instance: in the life of Agricola, Tacitus, speaking of Domitian's treatment of Agricola, makes this observation; 'Proprium humani ingenii est, odisse quem læseris.'* The observation is just and well applied; but the form in which it stands, is abstract and philosophical. A thought of the same kind has a finer effect elsewhere in the same historian, when speaking of the jealousies which Germanicus knew to be entertained against him by Livia and Tiberius; 'Anxius,' says he, 'occultis in se patrui aviæque odiis, quorum causæ acriores quia iniquæ.'† Here a profound moral observation is made, but it is made without the appearance of making it in form; it is introduced as a part of the narration, in assigning a reason for the anxiety of Germanicus. We have another instance of the same kind, in the account which he gives of a mutiny raised against Rufus, who was a 'Præfectus Castrorum,' on account of the severe labour which he imposed on the soldiers. 'Quippe Rufus, diu manipularis, dein centurio, mox castris præfectus, antiquam duramque militiam revocabat, vetus operis et laboris, et eo immitior quia toleraverat.'‡ There was room for turning this into a general observation, that they who have been educated and hardened in toils, are commonly found to be the most severe in requiring the like toils from others. But the manner in which Tacitus introduces this sentiment as a stroke in the character of Rufus, gives it much more life and spirit. This historian has a particular talent of intermixing after this manner, with the course of his narrative, many striking sentiments and useful observations.

* 'It belongs to human nature to hate the man whom you have injured.'

† 'Uneasy in his mind, on account of the concealed hatred entertained against him by his uncle and grandmother, which was the more bitter because the cause of it was unjust.'

‡ 'For Rufus, who had long been a common soldier, afterward a centurion, and at length a general officer, restored the severe military discipline of ancient times. Grown old amidst toils and labours, he was the more rigid in imposing them, because he had been accustomed to bear them.'

Let us next proceed to consider the proper qualities of historical narration. It is obvious, that on the manner of narration much must depend, as the first notion of history is the recital of past facts; and how much one mode of recital may be preferable to another, we shall soon be convinced, by thinking of the different effects, which the same story, when told by two different persons, is found to produce.

The first virtue of historical narration, is clearness, order, and due connexion. To attain this, the historian must be completely master of his subject; he must see the whole as at one view; and comprehend the chain and dependance of all its parts, that he may introduce every thing in its proper place; that he may lead us smoothly along the tract of affairs which are recorded, and may always give us the satisfaction of seeing how one event arises out of another. Without this there can be neither pleasure nor instruction, in reading history. Much for this end will depend on the observance of that unity in the general plan and conduct, which, in the preceding Lecture, I recommended. Much too will depend on the proper management of transitions, which forms one of the chief ornaments of this kind of writing, and is one of the most difficult in execution. Nothing tries an historian's abilities more, than so to lay his train beforehand, as to make us pass naturally and agreeably from one part of his subject to another; to employ no clumsy and awkward junctures; and to contrive ways and means of forming some union among transactions, which seem to be most widely separated from one another.

In the next place, as history is a very dignified species of composition, gravity must always be maintained in the narration. There must be no meanness nor vulgarity in the style; no quaint nor colloquial phrases; no affectation of pertness or of wit. The smart, or the sneering manner of telling a story, is inconsistent with the historical character. I do not say, that an historian is never to let himself down. He may sometimes do it with propriety, in order to diversify the strain of his narration, which, if it be perfectly uniform, is apt to become tiresome. But he should be careful never to descend too far; and, on occasions where a light or ludicrous anecdote is proper to be recorded, it is generally better to throw it into a note, than to hazard becoming too familiar by introducing it into the body of the work.

But an historian may possess these qualities of being perspicuous, distinct, and grave, and may notwithstanding be a dull writer; in which case we shall reap little benefit from his labours. We shall read him without pleasure; or, most probably, we shall soon give over reading him at all. He must therefore study to render his narration interesting; which is the quality that chiefly distinguishes a writer of genius and eloquence.

Two things are especially conducive to this; the first is, a just medium in the conduct of narration, between a rapid or crowded recital of facts, and a prolix detail. The former embarrasses, and the latter tires us. An historian that would interest us, must know when to be concise, and where he ought to enlarge; passing concisely over slight and unimportant events, but dwelling on such as are striking and considerable in their nature, or pregnant with consequences; preparing beforehand our attention to them, and bringing them forth into the most full and conspicuous light. The next thing he must attend to, is a proper selection of the circumstances belonging to those events which he chooses to relate fully. General facts make a slight impression on the mind. It is by means of circumstances and particulars properly chosen, that a narration becomes interesting and affecting to the reader. These give life, body, and colouring to the recital of facts, and enable us to behold them as present, and passing before our eyes. It is this employment of circumstances, in narration, that is properly termed historical painting.

In all these virtues of narration, particularly in this last, of picturesque descriptive narration, several of the ancient historians eminently excel. Hence, the pleasure that is found in reading Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus. They are all conspicuous for the art of narration. Herodotus is, at all times, an agreeable writer, and relates every thing with that *naiveté* and simplicity of manner, which never fails to interest the reader. Though the manner of Thucydides be more dry and harsh, yet on great occasions, as when he is giving an account of the plague of Athens, the siege of Platæa, the sedition in Corcyra, the defeat of the Athenians in Sicily, he displays a very strong and masterly power of description. Xenophon's Cyropædia, and his Anabasis, or Retreat of the Ten Thousand, are extremely beautiful. The circumstances are finely selected, and the narration is easy and engaging: but his Hellenics, or Continuation of the History of Thucydides, is a much inferior work. Sallust's art of historical painting in his Catilinarian, but more especially in his Jugurthine War, is well known; though his style is liable to censure, as too studied and affected.

Livy is more unexceptionable in his manner; and is excelled by no historian whatever in the art of narration; several remarkable examples might be given from him. His account, for instance, of the famous defeat of the Roman army by the Samnites, at the Furcæ Caudinæ, in the beginning of the ninth book, affords one of the most beautiful exemplifications of historical painting, that is any where to be met with. We have, first, an exact description of the narrow pass between two mountains, into which the enemy had decoyed the Romans. When they find themselves caught, and no

hope of escape left, we are made to see, first, their astonishment, next their indignation, and then, their dejection, painted in the most lively manner, by such circumstances and actions as were natural to persons in their situation. The restless and unquiet manner in which they pass the night; the consultations of the Samnites; the various measures proposed to be taken; the messages between the two armies, all heighten the scene. At length, in the morning, the consuls return to the camp, and inform them that they could receive no other terms but that of surrendering their arms, and passing under the yoke, which was considered as the last mark of ignominy for a conquered army. Part of what then follows, I shall give in the author's own words. 'Redintegravit luctum in castris consulum adventus, ut vix ab iis abstinerent manus, quorum temeritate in eum locum deducti essent. Alii alios intueri, contemplari arma mox tradenda, et inermes futuras dextras; proponere sibimet ipsi ante oculos jugum hostile, et ludibria victoris, et vultus superbos, et per armatos inermium iter. Inde fœdi agminis miserabilem viam, per sociorum urbes reditum in patriam ac parentes quo sæpe ipsi triumphantes venissent. Se solos sine vulnere, sine ferro, sine acie victos; sibi non stringere licuisse gladios, non manum cum hoste conserere; sibi nequicquam arma, nequicquam vires, nequicquam animos datos. Hæc frementibus, hora fatalis ignominiæ advenit. Jamprimùm cum singulis vestimentis, inermes extra vallum abire jussi. Tum a consulibus abire lictores jussi, paludamentaque detracta. Tantam hoc inter ipsos, qui paulo ante eos dedendos, lacerandosque censuerant, miserationem fecit, ut suæ quisque conditionis oblitus, ab illâ deformatione tantæ majestatis, velut ab nefando spectaculo, averteret oculos. Primi consules, prope seminudi, sub jugum missi,'* &c. The rest of the story, which it would be too long to

* The arrival of the consuls in the camp, wrought up their passions to such a degree, that they could scarcely abstain from laying violent hands on them, as by their rashness they had been brought into this situation. They began to look on one another; to cast a melancholy eye on their arms, which were now to be surrendered, and on their right hands, which were to become defenceless. The yoke under which they were to pass; the scoffs of the conquerors; and their haughty looks when, disarmed and stripped, they should be led through the hostile lines; all rose before their eyes. They then looked forward to the sad journey which awaited them, when they were to pass as a vanquished and disgraced army through the territories of their allies, by whom they had often been beheld returning in triumph to their families and native land. They alone, they muttered to one another, without an engagement, without a single blow, had been conquered. To their hard fate it fell, never to have had it in their power to draw a sword, or to look an enemy in the face; to them only, arms, strength, and courage, had been given in vain. While they were thus giving vent to their indignation, the fatal moment of their ignominy arrived. First, they were all commanded to come forth from the camp, without armour, and in a single garment. Next, orders were given, that the consuls should be left without their lictors, and that they should be stripped of their robes. Such commiseration did this affront excite among them, who, but a little before, had been for delivering

insert, is carried on with the same beauty, and full of picturesque circumstances.

Tacitus is another author eminent for historical painting, though in a manner altogether different from that of Livy. Livy's descriptions are more full, more plain, and natural; those of Tacitus consist in a few bold strokes. He selects one or two remarkable circumstances, and sets them before us in a strong, and, generally, in a new and uncommon light. Such is the following picture of the situation of Rome, and of the Emperor Galba, when Otho was advancing against him: 'Agebatur huc illuc Galba, vario turbæ fluctuantis impulsu, completis undique basilicis et templis, lugubri prospectu. Neque populi aut plebis ulla vox; sed attoniti vultus, et conversæ ad omnia aures. Non tumultus, non quies; sed quale magni metûs, et magnæ iræ, silentium est.'† No image in any poet is more strong and expressive than this last stroke of the description: 'Non tumultus, non quies; sed quale,' &c. This is a conception of the sublime kind, and discovers high genius. Indeed, throughout all his work, Tacitus shews the hand of a master. As he is profound in reflection, so he is striking in description, and pathetic in sentiment. The philosopher, the poet, and the historian, all meet in him. Though the period of which he writes may be reckoned unfortunate for an historian, he has made it afford us many interesting exhibitions of human nature. The relations which he

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up those very consuls to the enemy, and for putting them to death, that every one forgot his own condition, and turned his eyes aside from this infamous disgrace, suffered by the consular dignity, as from a spectacle which was too detestable to be beheld. The consuls, almost half-naked, were first made to pass under the yoke,' &c.

* The description which Cæsar gives of the consternation occasioned in his camp, by the accounts which were spread among his troops, of the ferocity, the size, and the courage of the Germans, affords an instance of historical painting, executed in a simple manner; and, at the same time, exhibiting a natural and lively scene. 'Dum paucos dies ad Vesontionem moratur, ex percunctatione nostrorum, vocibusque Gallorum ac mercatorum, qui ingenti magnitudine corporum Germanos, incredibili virtute, atque exercitatione in armis esse prædicabant; sæpe numero sese cum iis congressos, ne vultum quidem atque aciem oculorum ferre potuisse; tantus subito terror omnem exercitum occupavit, ut non mediocriter omnium mentes animosque perturbaret. Hic primum ortus est a tribunis militum, ac præfectis, reliquisque qui ex urbe, amicitiæ causâ, Cæsarem secuti, suum periculum miserabantur, quod non magnum in re militari usum habebant quorum alius, aliâ causâ illatâ quam sibi ad proficiscendum necessariam esse diceret, petebat ut ejus voluntate discedere liceret. Nonnulli pudore adducti, ut timoris suspicionem vitarent remanebant. Hi neque vultum fingere, neque interdum lacrymas tenere poterant. Abditi in tabernaculis, aut suum fatum querebantur, aut cum familiaribus suis, commune periculum miserabantur. Vulgo, totis castris testamenta obsignabantur.' De Bell. Gall. l. i.

† 'Galba was driven to and fro by the tide of the multitude, sheving him from place to place. The temples and public buildings were filled with crowds of a dismal appearance. No clamours were heard, either from the citizens, or from the rabble. Their countenances were filled with consternation; their ears were employed in listening with anxiety. It was not a tumult; it was not quietness; it was the silence of terror, and of wrath.'

gives of the deaths of several eminent personages are as affecting as the deepest tragedies. He paints with a glowing pencil; and possesses, beyond all writers, the talent of painting, not to the imagination merely, but to the heart. With many of the most distinguished beauties, he is, at the same time, not a perfect model for history; and such as have formed themselves upon him, have seldom been successful. He is to be admired, rather than imitated. In his reflections, he is too refined; in his style too concise, sometimes quaint and affected, often abrupt and obscure. History seems to require a more natural, flowing, and popular manner.

The ancients employed one embellishment of history which the moderns have laid aside, I mean orations, which, on weighty occasions, they put into the mouths of some of their chief personages. By means of these, they diversified their history; they conveyed both moral and political instruction; and, by the opposite arguments which were employed, they gave us a view of the sentiments of different parties. Thucydides was the first who introduced this method. The orations with which his history abounds, and those too of some other Greek and Latin historians, are among the most valuable remains which we have of ancient eloquence. How beautiful soever they are, it may be much questioned, I think, whether they find a proper place in history. I am rather inclined to think that they are unsuitable to it. For they form a mixture which is unnatural in history, of fiction with truth. We know that these orations are entirely of the author's own composition, and that he has introduced some celebrated person haranguing in a public place, purely that he might have an opportunity of shewing his own eloquence, or delivering his own sentiments, under the name of that person. This is a sort of poetical liberty which does not suit the gravity of history, throughout which an air of the strictest truth should always reign. Orations may be an embellishment to history; such might also poetical compositions be, introduced under the name of some of the personages mentioned in the narration, who were known to have possessed poetical talents. But neither the one nor the other finds a proper place in history. Instead of inserting formal orations, the method adopted by later writers seems better and more natural; that of the historian, on some great occasion, delivering, in his own person, the sentiments and reasonings of the opposite parties, or the substance of what was understood to be spoken in some public assembly; which he may do without the liberty of fiction.

The drawing of characters is one of the most splendid, and, at the same time, one of the most difficult ornaments of historical composition. For characters are generally considered as pro-

fessed exhibitions of fine writing; and an historian who seeks to shine in them, is frequently in danger of carrying refinement to excess, from a desire of appearing very profound and penetrating He brings together so many contrasts, and subtile oppositions of qualities, that we are rather dazzled with sparkling expressions, than entertained with any clear conception of a human character. A writer who would characterize in an instructive and masterly manner, should be simple in his style, and should avoid all quaintness and affectation; at the same time not contenting himself with giving us general outlines only, but descending into those peculiarities which mark a character in its most strong and distinctive features. The Greek historians sometimes give eulogiums, but rarely draw full and professed characters. The two ancient authors who have laboured this part of historical composition most, are Sallust and Tacitus.

As history is a species of writing designed for the instruction of mankind, sound morality should always reign in it. Both in describing characters, and in relating transactions, the author should always shew himself to be on the side of virtue. To deliver moral instruction in a formal manner, falls not within his province; but both as a good man, and as a good writer, we expect that he should discover sentiments of respect for virtue, and an indignation at flagrant vice. To appear neutral and indifferenc with respect to good and bad characters, and to affect a crafty and political, rather than a moral turn of thought, will, besides other bad effects, derogate greatly from the weight of historical composition, and will render the strain of it much more cold and uninteresting. We are always most interested in the transactions which are going on, when our sympathy is awakened by the story, and when we become engaged in the fate of the actors. But this effect can never be produced by a writer who is deficient in sensibility and moral feeling.

As the observations which I have hitherto made, have mostly respected the ancient historians, it may naturally be expected that I should also take some notice of the moderns who have excelled in this kind of writing.

The country in Europe where the historical genius has, in later ages, shone forth with most lustre, beyond doubt, is Italy. The national character of the Italians seems favourable to it. They were always distinguished as an acute, penetrating, reflecting people, remarkable for political sagacity and wisdom, and who early addicted themselves to the arts of writing. Accordingly, soon after the restoration of letters, Machiavel, Guicciardini, Davila, Bentivoglio, Father Paul, became highly conspicuous for historical merit. They all appear to have conceived very just ideas of history; and are agreeable, instructive, and interesting writers. In their manner

of narration, they are formed upon the ancients; some of them, as Bentivoglio and Guicciardini, have, in imitation of them, introduced orations into their history. In the profoundness and distinctness of their political views, they may, perhaps, be esteemed to have surpassed the ancients.' Critics have, at the same time, observed some imperfections in each of them. Machiavel, in his History of Florence, is not altogether so interesting as one would expect an author of his abilities to be; either through his own defect, or through some unhappiness in his subject, which led him into a very minute detail of the intrigues of one city. Guicciardini, at all times sensible and profound, is taxed for dwelling so long on the Tuscan affairs as to be sometimes tedious; a defect which is also imputed, occasionally, to the judicious Father Paul. Bentivoglio, in his excellent History of the Wars of Flanders, is accused for approaching to the florid and pompous manner; and Davila, though one of the most agreeable and entertaining relaters, has manifestly this defect, of spreading a sort of uniformity over all his characters, by representing them as guided too regularly by political interest. But, although some such objections may be made to these authors, they deserve, upon the whole, to be placed in the first rank of modern historical writers. The Wars of Flanders, written in Latin by Famianus Strada, is a book of some note; but is not entitled to the same reputation as the works of the other historians I have named. Strada is too violently partial to the Spanish cause; and too open a panegyrist of the Prince of Parma. He is florid, diffuse, and an affected imitator of the manner and style of Livy.

Among the French, as there has been much good writing in many kinds, so also in the historical. That ingenious nation, who have done so much honour to modern literature, possess, in an eminent degree, the talent of narration. Many of their later historical writers are spirited, lively, and agreeable; and some of them not deficient in profoundness and penetration. They have not, however, produced any such capital historians as the Italians whom I mentioned above.

Our island, till within these few years, was not eminent for its historical productions. Early, indeed, Scotland acquired reputation by means of the celebrated Buchanan. He is an elegant writer, classical in his Latinity, and agreeable both in narration and description. But one cannot but suspect him to be more attentive to elegance, than to accuracy. Accustomed to form his political notions wholly upon the plans of ancient governments, the feudal system seems never to have entered into his thoughts; and as this was the basis of the Scottish constitution, his political views are, of course, inaccurate and imperfect. When he comes to the transactions of his own times, there is such a change in his

manner of writing, and such an asperity in his style, that, on what side soever the truth lies with regard to those dubious and long controverted facts which make the subject of that part of his work, it is impossible to clear him from being deeply tinctured with the spirit of party.

Among the older English historians, the most considerable is Lord Clarendon. Though he writes as the professed apologist of one side, yet there appears more impartiality in his relation of facts than might at first be expected. A great spirit of virtue and probity runs through his work. He maintains all the dignity of an historian. His sentences, indeed, are often too long, and his general manner is prolix; but his style, on the whole, is manly; and his merit, as an historian, is much beyond mediocrity. Bishop Burnet is lively and perspicuous; but he has hardly any other historical merit. His style is too careless and familiar for history; his characters are, indeed, marked with a bold and strong hand; but they are generally light and satirical; and he abounds so much in little stories concerning himself, that he resembles more a writer of memoirs than of history. During a long period, English historical authors seemed to aim at nothing higher than an exact relation of facts; till of late the distinguished names of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, have raised the British character, in this species of writing, to high reputation and dignity.

I observed in the preceding Lecture, that annals, memoirs, and lives, are the inferior kinds of historical composition. It will be proper, before dismissing this subject, to make a few observations upon them. Annals are commonly understood to signify a collection of facts, digested according to chronological order; rather serving for the materials of history, than aspiring to the name of history themselves. All that is required, therefore, in a writer of such annals, is to be faithful, distinct, and complete.

Memoirs denote a sort of composition in which an author does not pretend to give full information of all the facts respecting the period of which he writes, but only to relate what he himself had access to know, or what he was concerned in, or what illustrates the conduct of some person, or the circumstances of some transaction, which he chooses for his subject. From a writer of memoirs, therefore, is not expected the same profound research, or enlarged information, as from a writer of history. He is not subject to the same laws of unvarying dignity and gravity. He may talk freely of himself; he may descend into the most familiar anecdotes. What is chiefly required of him is, that he be sprightly and interesting; and, especially, that he inform us of things that are useful and curious; that he convey to us some sort of knowledge worth the acquiring. This is a species of writing very bewitching to such as love to write concerning themselves, and conceive

every transaction in which they had a share to be of singular importance. There is no wonder, therefore, that a nation so sprightly as the French should, for two centuries past, have been pouring forth a whole flood of memoirs; the greatest part of which are little more than agreeable trifles.

Some, however, must be excepted from this general character; two in particular; the Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz, and those of the Duke of Sully. From Retz's Memoirs, besides the pleasure of agreeable and lively narration, we may derive also much instruction, and much knowledge of human nature. Though his politics be often too fine-spun, yet the memoirs of a professed factious leader, such as the cardinal was, wherein he draws both his own character, and that of several great personages of his time, so fully, cannot be read by any person of good sense without benefit. The Memoirs of the Duke of Sully, in the state in which they are now given to the public, have great merit, and deserve to be mentioned with particular praise. No memoirs approach more nearly to the usefulness and the dignity of a full legitimate history. They have this peculiar advantage, of giving us a beautiful display of two of the most illustrious characters which history presents; Sully himself, one of the ablest and most incorrupt ministers, and Henry IV. one of the greatest and most amiable princes of modern times. I know few books more full of virtue and of good sense than Sully's Memoirs; few, therefore, more proper to form both the heads and the hearts of such as are designed for public business, and action, in the world.

Biography, or the writing of lives, is a very useful kind of composition; less formal and stately than history; but to the bulk of readers, perhaps, no less instructive; as it affords them the opportunity of seeing the characters and tempers, the virtues and failings, of eminent men fully displayed; and admits them into a more thorough and intimate acquaintance with such persons, than history generally allows. For a writer of lives may descend, with propriety, to minute circumstances, and familiar incidents. It is expected of him, that he is to give the private, as well as the public life, of the person whose actions he records; nay, it is from private life, from familiar, domestic, and seemingly trivial occurrences, that we often receive most light into the real character. In this species of writing, Plutarch has no small merit; and to him we stand indebted for much of the knowledge that we possess, concerning several of the most eminent personages of antiquity. His matter is, indeed, better than his manner; as he cannot lay claim to any peculiar beauty or elegance. His judgment too, and his accuracy, have sometimes been taxed; but whatever defects of this kind he may be liable to, his lives of eminent men will always be considered as a valuable treasure of instruction. He is remark-

able for being one of the most humane writers of all antiquity; less dazzled than many of them are, with the exploits of valour and ambition; and fond of displaying his great men to us, in the more gentle lights of retirement and private life.

I cannot conclude the subject of history, without taking notice of a very great improvement which has, of late years, begun to be introduced into historical composition; I mean, a more particular attention than was formerly given to laws, customs, commerce, religion, literature, and every other thing that tends to shew the spirit and genius of nations. It is now understood to be the business of an able historian to exhibit manners, as well as facts and events; and assuredly, whatever displays the state and life of mankind, in different periods, and illustrates the progress of the human mind, is more useful and interesting than the detail of sieges and battles. The person, to whom we are most indebted for the introduction of this improvement into history, is the celebrated M. Voltaire, whose genius has shone with such surprising lustre, in so many different parts of literature. His Age of Louis XIV. was one of the first great productions in this taste; and soon drew throughout all Europe, that general attention, and received that high approbation, which so ingenious and eloquent a production merited. His Essay on the general History of Europe, since the days of Charlemagne, is not to be considered either as a history, or the proper plan of an historical work; but only as a series of observations on the chief events that have happened throughout several centuries, and on the changes that successively took place in the spirit and manners of different nations. Though, in some dates and facts, it may, perhaps, be inaccurate, and is tinged with those particularities which unhappily distinguish Voltaire's manner of thinking on religious subjects, yet it contains so many enlarged and instructive views, as justly to merit the attention of all who either read or write the history of those ages.

LECTURE XXXVII.

PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING—DIALOGUE—EPISTOLARY WRITING—FICTITIOUS HISTORY.

As history is both a very dignified species of composition, and by the regular form which it assumes, falls directly under the laws of criticism, I discoursed of it fully in the two preceding Lectures. The remaining species of composition, in prose, afford less room for critical observation.

Philosophical writing, for instance, will not lead us into any long

discussion. As the professed object of philosophy is to convey instruction, and as they who study it are supposed to do so for instruction, not for entertainment, the style, the form, and dress of such writings, are less material objects. They are objects, however, that must not be wholly neglected. He who attempts to instruct mankind, without studying, at the same time, to engage their attention, and to interest them in his subject by his manner of exhibiting it, is not likely to prove successful. The same truths, and reasonings, delivered in a dry and cold manner, or with a proper measure of elegance and beauty, will make very different impressions on the minds of men.

It is manifest that every philosophical writer must study the utmost perspicuity: and, by reflecting on what was formerly delivered on the subject with respect both to single words, and the construction of sentences, we may be convinced that this is a study which demands considerable attention to the rules of style, and good writing. Beyond mere perspicuity, strict accuracy and precision are required in a philosophical writer. He must employ no words of uncertain meaning, no loose nor indeterminate expressions; and should avoid using words which are seemingly synonymous, without carefully attending to the variation which they make upon the idea.

To be clear then and precise, is one requisite which we have a title to demand from every philosophical writer. He may possess this quality, and be at the same time a very dry writer. He should therefore study some degree of embellishment, in order to render his composition pleasing and graceful. One of the most agreeable, and one of the most useful embellishments which a philosopher can employ, consists in illustrations taken from historical facts, and the characters of men. All moral and political subjects naturally afford scope for these; and wherever there is room for employing them, they seldom fail of producing a happy effect. They diversify the composition; they relieve the mind from the fatigue of mere reasoning, and at the same time raise more full conviction than any reasonings produce: for they take philosophy out of the abstract, and give weight to speculation, by shewing its connexion with real life, and the actions of mankind.

Philosophical writing admits besides of a polished, a neat, and elegant style. It admits of metaphors, comparisons, and all the calm figures of speech, by which an author may convey his sense to the understanding with clearness and force, at the same time that he entertains the imagination. He must take great care, however, that all his ornaments be of the chastest kind, never partaking of the florid or the tumid; which is so unpardonable in a professed philosopher, that it is much better for him to err on the side of naked simplicity, than on that of too much ornament.

Some of the ancients, as Plato and Cicero, have left us philosophical treatises composed with much elegance and beauty. Seneca has been long and justly censured for the affectation that appears in his style. He is too fond of a certain brilliant and sparking manner; of antithesis and quaint sentences. It cannot be denied, at the same time, that he often expresses himself with much liveliness and force; though his style, upon the whole, is far from deserving imitation. In English, Mr. Locke's celebrated treatise on Human Understanding, may be pointed out as a model, on the one hand, of the greatest clearness and distinctness of philosophical style, with very little approach to ornament; Lord Shaftesbury's writings, on the other hand, exhibit philosophy dressed up with all the ornament which it can admit; perhaps with more than is perfectly suited to it.

Philosophical composition sometimes assumes a form, under which it mingles more with works of taste, when carried on in the way of dialogue and conversation. Under this form the ancients have given us some of their chief philosophical works; and several of the moderns have endeavoured to imitate them. Dialogue writing may be executed in two ways, either as direct conversation, where none but the speakers appear, which is the method that Plato uses; or as the recital of a conversation, where the author himself appears, and gives an account of what passed in discourse; which is the method that Cicero generally follows. But though those different methods make some variation in the form, yet the nature of the composition is at bottom the same in both, and subject to the same laws.

A dialogue, in one or other of these forms, on some philosophical, moral, or critical subject, when it is well conducted, stands in a high rank among the works of taste; but is much more difficult in the execution than is commonly imagined. For it requires more, than merely the introduction of different persons speaking in succession. It ought to be a natural and spirited representation of real conversation; exhibiting the character and manners of the several speakers, and suiting to the character of each that peculiarity of thought and expression which distinguishes him from another. A dialogue, thus conducted, gives the reader a very agreeable entertainment; as by means of the debate going on among the personages, he receives a fair and full view of both sides of the argument; and is, at the same time, amused with polite conversation, and with a display of consistent and well-supported characters. An author, therefore, who has genius for executing such a composition after this manner, has it in his power both to instruct and to please.

But the greatest part of modern dialogue writers have no idea of any composition of this sort; and bating the outward forms

conversation, and that one speaks, and another answers, it is quite the same as if the author spoke in person throughout the whole. He sets up a Philotheus, perhaps, and a Philatheos, or an A and a B; who after mutual compliments, and after admiring the fineness of the morning or evening, and the beauty of the prospects around them, enter into conference concerning some grave matter; and all that we know farther of them is, that the one personates the author, a man of learning, no doubt, and of good principles; and the other is a man of straw, set up to propose some trivial objections: over which he first gains a most entire triumph, and leaves his sceptical antagonist at the end much humbled, and, generally, convinced of his error. This is a very frigid and insipid manner of writing; the more so, as it is an attempt towards something, which we see the author cannot support. It is the form without the spirit of conversation. The dialogue serves no purpose, but to make awkward interruptions; and we should with more patience hear the author continuing always to reason himself, and to remove the objections that are made to his principles, than be troubled with the unmeaning appearance of two persons, whom we see to be in reality no more than one.

Among the ancients, Plato is eminent for the beauty of his Dialogues. The scenery, and the circumstances of many of them, are beautifully painted. The characters of the Sophists, with whom Socrates disputed, are well drawn; a variety of personages are exhibited to us; we are introduced into a real conversation, often supported with much life and spirit, after the Socratic manner. For richness and beauty of imagination, no philosophic writer, ancient or modern, is comparable to Plato. The only fault of his imagination is, such an excess of fertility as allows it sometimes to obscure his judgment. It frequently carries him into allegory, fiction, enthusiasm, and the airy regions of mystical theology. The philosopher is, at times, lost in the poet. But whether we be edified with the matter or not (and much edification he often affords), we are always entertained with the manner; and left with a strong impression of the sublimity of the author's genius.

Cicero's Dialogues, or those recitals of conversations which he has introduced into several of his philosophical and critical works, are not so spirited, nor so characteristical, as those of Plato. Yet some, as that 'De Oratore' especially, are agreeable and well supported. They shew us conversation carried on among some of the principal persons of ancient Rome, with freedom, good-breeding, and dignity. The author of the elegant dialogue 'De Causis Corruptæ Eloquentiæ,' which is annexed sometimes to the works of Quinctilian, and sometimes to those of Tacitus, has happily imitated, perhaps has excelled, Cicero, in this manner of writing.

Lucian is a dialogue writer of much eminence; though his

subjects are seldom such as can entitle him to be ranked among philosophical authors. He has given the model of the light and humorous dialogue, and has carried it to great perfection. A character of levity, and at the same time of wit and penetration, distinguishes all his writings. His great object was, to expose the follies of superstition, and the pedantry of philosophy, which prevailed in his age; and he could not have taken any more successful method for this end, than what he has employed in his Dialogues, especially in those of the Gods and of the Dead, which are full of pleasantry and satire. In this invention of dialogues of the dead, he has been followed by several modern authors. Fontenelle, in particular, has given us dialogues of this sort, which are sprightly and agreeable; but as for characters, whoever his personages be, they all become Frenchmen in his hands. Indeed, few things in composition are more difficult, than in the course of a moral dialogue to exhibit characters properly distinguished; as calm conversation furnishes none of those assistances for bringing characters into light, which the active scenes, and interesting situations of the drama, afford. Hence few authors are eminent for characteristical dialogues on grave subjects. One of the most remarkable in the English language, is a writer of the last age, Dr. Henry More, in his Divine Dialogues, relating to the foundations of natural religion. Though his style be now in some measure obsolete, and his speakers be marked with the academic stiffness of those times, yet the dialogue is animated by a variety of character and a sprightliness of conversation, beyond what are commonly met with in writings of this kind. Bishop Berkeley's Dialogues concerning the existence of matter, do not attempt any display of characters; but furnish an instance of a very abstract subject, rendered clear and intelligible by means of conversation properly managed.

I proceed next to make some observations on Epistolary Writing: which possesses a kind of middle place between the serious and amusing species of composition. Epistolary writing appears, at first view, to stretch into a very wide field. For there is no subject whatever, on which one may not convey his thoughts to the public, in the form of a letter. Lord Shaftesbury, for instance, Mr. Harris, and several other writers, have chosen to give this form to philosophical treatises. But this is not sufficient to class such treatises under the head of epistolary composition. Though they bear, in the title-page, a Letter to a Friend, after the first address, the friend disappears, and we see that it is, in truth, the public with whom the author corresponds. Seneca's Epistles are of this sort. There is no probability that they ever passed in correspondence as real letters. They are no other than miscellaneous dissertations on moral subjects; which the author, for his convenience, chose to put into the epistolary form. Even where

one writes a real letter on some formal topic, as of moral or religious consolation to a person under distress, such as Sir William Temple has written to the Countess of Essex on the death of her daughter, he is at liberty, on such occasions, to write wholly as a divine or as a philosopher, and to assume the style and manner of one, without reprehension. We consider the author not as writing a letter, but as composing a discourse, suited particularly to the circumstances of some one person.

Epistolary writing becomes a distinct species of composition, subject to the cognizance of criticism, only, or chiefly, when it is of the easy and familiar kind; when it is conversation carried on upon paper, between two friends at a distance. Such an intercourse, when well conducted, may be rendered very agreeable to readers of taste. If the subject of the letters be important, they will be the more valuable. Even though there should be nothing very considerable in the subject, yet if the spirit and turn of the correspondence be agreeable; if they be written in a sprightly manner, and with native grace and ease, they may still be entertaining; more especially if there be any thing to interest us, in the characters of those who write them. Hence the curiosity which the public has always discovered, concerning the letters of eminent persons. We expect in them to discover somewhat of their real character. It is childish indeed to expect, that in letters we are to find the whole heart of the author unveiled. Concealment and disguise take place, more or less, in all human intercourse. But still, as letters from one friend to another make the nearest approach to conversation, we may expect to see more of a character displayed in these than in other productions, which are studied for public view. We please ourselves with beholding the writer in a situation which allows him to be at his ease, and to give vent occasionally to the overflowings of his heart.

Much, therefore, of the merit, and the agreeableness of epistolary writing, will depend on its introducing us into some acquaintance with the writer. There, if any where, we look for the man, not for the author. Its first and fundamental requisite is, to be natural and simple; for a stiff and laboured manner is as bad in a letter as it is in conversation. This does not banish sprightliness and wit. These are graceful in letters, just as they are in conversation; when they flow easily, and without being studied; when employed so as to season, not to cloy. One who, either in conversation or in letters, affects to shine and to sparkle always, will not please long. The style of letters should not be too highly polished. It ought to be neat and correct, but no more. All nicety about words, betrays study; and hence musical periods, and appearances of number and harmony in arrangement, should be

carefully avoided in letters. The best letters are commonly such as the authors have written with most facility. What the heart or the imagination dictates, always flows readily; but where there is no subject to warm or interest these, constraint appears; and hence, those letters of mere compliment, congratulation, or affected condolence, which have cost the authors most labour in composing, and which, for that reason, they perhaps consider as their master-pieces, never fail of being the most disagreeable and insipid to the readers.

It ought, at the same time, to be remembered, that the ease and simplicity which I have recommended in epistolary correspondence, are not to be understood as importing entire carelessness. In writing to the most intimate friend, a certain degree of attention, both to the subject and the style, is requisite and becoming. It is no more than what we owe both to ourselves, and to the friend with whom we correspond. A slovenly and negligent manner of writing, is a disobliging mark of want of respect. The liberty, besides, of writing letters with too careless a hand, is apt to betray persons into imprudence in what they write. The first requisite, both in conversation and correspondence, is to attend to all the proper decorums which our own character, and that of others, demand. An imprudent expression in conversation may be forgotten and pass away; but when we take the pen into our hand, we must remember, that 'Litera scripta manet.'

Pliny's Letters are one of the most celebrated collections which the ancients have given us, in the epistolary way. They are elegant and polite; and exhibit a very pleasing and amiable view of the author. But, according to the vulgar phrase, they smell too much of the lamp. They are too elegant and fine; and it is not easy to avoid thinking, that the author is casting an eye towards the public, when he is appearing to write only for his friends. Nothing indeed is more difficult, than for an author, who publishes his own letters, to divest himself altogether of attention to the opinion of the world in what he says; by which means, he becomes much less agreeable than a man of parts would be, if, without any constraint of this sort, he were writing to his intimate friend.

Cicero's Epistles, though not so showy as those of Pliny, are, on several accounts, a far more valuable collection; indeed, the most valuable collection of letters extant in any language. They are letters of real business, written to the greatest men of the age, composed with purity and elegance, but without the least affectation and, what adds greatly to their merit, written without any intention of being published to the world. For it appears, that Cicero never kept copies of his own letters; and we are wholly indebted to the care of his freedman Tyro for the large collection that was made,

after his death, of those which are now extant, amounting to near a thousand.* They contain the most authentic materials of the history of that age; and are the last monuments which remain of Rome in its free state; the greatest part of them being written during that important crisis, when the republic was on the point of ruin; the most interesting situation, perhaps, which is to be found in the affairs of mankind. To his intimate friends, especially to Atticus, Cicero lays open himself and his heart, with entire freedom. In the course of his correspondence with others, we are introduced into acquaintance with several of the principal personages of Rome; and it is remarkable, that most of Cicero's correspondents, as well as himself, are elegant and polite writers; which serves to heighten our idea of the taste and manners of that age.

The most distinguished collection of letters in the English language, is that of Mr. Pope, Dean Swift, and their friends; partly published in Mr. Pope's Works, and partly in those of Dean Swift. This collection is, on the whole, an entertaining and agreeable one; and contains much wit and refinement. It is not, however, altogether free from the fault which I imputed to Pliny's Epistles, of too much study and refinement. In the variety of letters from different persons, contained in that collection, we find many that are written with ease, and a beautiful simplicity. Those of Dr. Arbuthnot, in particular, always deserve that praise. Dean Swift's also are unaffected; and as a proof of their being so, they exhibit his character fully, with all its defects; though it were to be wished, for the honour of his memory, that his epistolary correspondence had not been drained to the dregs, by so many successive publications as have been given to the world. Several of Lord Bolingbroke's, and of Bishop Atterbury's letters, are masterly. The censure of writing letters in too artificial a manner falls heaviest on Mr. Pope himself. There is visibly more study, and less of nature and the heart in his letters, than in those of some of his correspondents. He had formed himself on the manner of Voiture, and is too fond of writing like a wit. His letters to ladies are full of affectation. Even in writing to his friends, how forced an introduction is the following, of a letter to Mr. Addison: 'I am more joyed at your return, than I should be at that of the sun, as much as I wish for him in this melancholy wet season; but it is his fate too, like your's, to be displeasing to owls and obscene animals, who cannot bear his lustre.' How stiff a compliment it is which he pays to Bishop Atterbury! 'Though the noise and daily bustle for the public be now over, I dare say you

* See his letter to Atticus, which was written a year or two before his death, in which he tells him, in answer to some inquiries concerning his epistles, that he had no collection of them, and that Tyro had only about seventy of them.

are still tendering its welfare; as the sun in winter, when seeming to retire from the world, is preparing warmth and benedictions for a better season.' This sentence might be tolerated in a harangue; but is very unsuitable to the style of one friend corresponding with another.

The gaiety and vivacity of the French genius appear to [illegible] advantage in their letters, and have given birth to several able publications. In the last age, Balzac and Voiture were the two most celebrated epistolary writers. Balzac's reputation indeed soon declined, on account of his swelling periods and pompous style. But Voiture continued long a favourite author. His composition is extremely sparkling; he shews a great deal of wit, and can trifle in the most entertaining manner. His only fault is, that he is too open and professed a wit to be thoroughly agreeable as a letter writer. The letters of Madame de Sevignè are now esteemed the most accomplished model of a familiar correspondence. They turn indeed very much upon trifles, the incidents of the day, and the news of the town; and they are overloaded with extravagant compliments, and expressions of fondness, to her favourite daughter; but withal, they shew such perpetual sprightliness, they contain such easy and varied narration, and so many strokes of the most lively and beautiful painting, perfectly free from any affectation, that they are justly entitled to high praise. The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagne are not unworthy of being named after those of Mad. de Sevignè. They have much of the French ease and vivacity; and retain more the character of agreeable epistolary style, than perhaps any letters which have appeared in the English [illegible]e.

There remains to be treated of, another species of composition in prose, which comprehends a very numerous, though, in general, a very insignificant class of writings, known by the name of Romances and Novels. These may, at first view, seem too insignificant to deserve that any particular notice should be taken of them. But I cannot be of this opinion. Mr. Fletcher of Salton, in one of his tracts, quotes it as the saying of a wise man, that give him the making of all the ballads of a nation, he would allow any one that pleased to make their laws. The saying was founded on reflection and good sense, and is applicable to the subject now before us. For any kind of writing, how trifling soever in appearance, that obtains a general currency, and especially that early preoccupies the imagination of the youth of both sexes, must demand particular attention. Its influence is likely to be considerable, both on the morals and taste of a nation.

In fact, fictitious histories might be employed for very useful purposes. They furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction, for painting human life and manners, for shewing the

errors into which we are betrayed by our passions, for rendering virtue amiable and vice odious. The effect of well-contrived stories, towards ig these purposes, is stronger than any effect that can be produced by simple and naked instruction; and hence we find, that the wisest men in all ages have more or less employed fables and fictions, as the vehicles of knowledge. These have ever been the basis of both epic and dramatic poetry. It is not, therefore, the nature of this sort of writing, considered in itself, but the faulty manner of its execution, that can expose it to any contempt. Lord Bacon takes notice of our taste for fictitious history, as a proof of the greatness and dignity of the human mind. He observes very ingeniously, that the objects of this world, and the common train of affairs which we behold going on in it, do not fill the mind, nor give it entire satisfaction. We seek for something that shall expand the mind in a greater degree: we seek for more heroic and illustrious deeds, for more diversified and surprising events, for a more splendid order of things, a more regular and just distribution of rewards and punishments, than what we find here: because we meet not with these in true history, we have recourse to fictitious. We create worlds according to our fancy, in order to gratify our capacious desires: 'Accommodando,' says that great philosopher, 'rerum simulachra ad animi desideria, non submittendo animum rebus, quod ratio facit, et historia.'* Let us then, since the subject wants neither dignity nor use, make a few observations on the rise and progress of fictitious history, and the different forms it has assumed in different countries.

In all countries we find its origin very ancient. The genius of the eastern nations, in particular, was from the earliest times much turned towards invention and the love of fiction. Their divinity, their philosophy, and their politics, were clothed in fables and parables. The Indians, the Persians, and Arabians, were all famous for their tales. The 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments' are the production of a romantic invention, but of a rich and amusing imagination; exhibiting a singular and curious display of manners and characters, and beautified with a very humane morality. Among the ancient Greeks, we hear of the Ionian and Milesian Tales; but they have now perished; and, from any account that we have of them, appear to have been of the loose and wanton kind. Some fictitious histories yet remain, that were composed during the decline of the Roman empire, by Apuleius, Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus, bishop of Trica, in the fourth century; but none of them are considerable enough to merit particular criticisms.

During the dark ages, this sort of writing assumed a new and very singular form, and for a long while made a great figure in the

* ' ing the appearances of things to the desires of the mind, not bringing down the mind, as history and philosophy do, to the course of events.'

world. The martial spirit of those nations, among whom the feudal government prevailed; the establishment of single combat, as an allowed method of deciding causes both of justice and honour; the appointment of champions in the cause of women, who could not maintain their own rights by the sword; together with the institution of military tournaments, in which different kingdoms vied with one another, gave rise in those times, to that marvellous system of chivalry, which is one of the most singular appearances in the history of mankind. Upon this were founded those romances of knight-errantry, which carried an ideal chivalry to a still more extravagant height than it had risen in fact. There was displayed in them a new and very wonderful sort of world, hardly bearing any resemblance to the world in which we dwell. Not only knights setting forth to redress all manner of wrongs, but in every page, magicians, dragons, and giants, invulnerable men, winged horses, enchanted armour, and enchanted castles; adventures absolutely incredible, yet suited to the gross ignorance of these ages, and to the legends, and superstitious notions concerning magic and necromancy, which then prevailed. This merit they had, of being writings of the highly moral and heroic kind. Their knights were patterns, not of courage merely, but of religion, generosity, courtesy, and fidelity; and the heroines were no less distinguished for modesty, delicacy, and the utmost dignity of manners.

These were the first compositions that received the name of Romances. The origin of this name is traced, by Mr. Huet, the learned bishop of Avranche, to the Provençal troubadours, a sort of story-tellers and bards in the county of Provence, where there subsisted some remains of literature and poetry. The language which prevailed in that country was a mixture of Latin and Gallic, called the Roman or Romance language; and as the stories of those troubadours were written in that language, hence it is said the name of romance, which we now apply to all fictitious composition.

The earliest of these romances is that which goes under the name of Turpin, the archbishop of Rheims, written in the eleventh century. The subject is, the achievements of Charlemagne and his peers, or paladins, in driving the Saracens out of France and part of Spain; the same subject which Ariosto has taken for his celebrated poem of Orlando Furioso, which is truly a chivalry romance, as extravagant as any of the rest, but partly heroic and partly comic, embellished with the highest graces of poetry. The romance of Turpin was followed by Amadis de Gaul, and many more of the same stamp. The crusades both furnished new matter, and increased the spirit for such writings; the Christians against the Saracens made the common groundwork of them; and from the eleventh to the

sixteenth century they continued to bewitch all Europe. In Spain, where the taste for this sort of writing had been most greedily caught, the ingenious Cervantes, in the beginning of the last century, contributed greatly to explode it; and the abolition of tournaments, the prohibition of single combat, the disbelief of magic and enchantments, and the change in general of manners throughout Europe, began to give a new turn to fictitious composition.

Then appeared the Astræa of D'Urfé, the Grand Cyrus, the Clelia, and Cleopatra of Mad. Scuderi, the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sidney, and other grave and stately compositions in the same style. These may be considered as forming the second stage of romance writing. The heroism and the gallantry, the moral and virtuous turn of the chivalry romance, were still preserved; but the dragons, the necromancers, and the enchanted castles, were banished, and some small resemblance to human nature was introduced. Still, however, there was too much of the marvellous in them to please an age which now aspired to refinement. The characters were discerned to be strained; the style to be swoln; the adventures incredible; the books themselves were voluminous and tedious.

Hence this sort of composition soon assumed a third form, and from magnificent heroic romance, dwindled down to the familiar novel. These novels both in France and England, during the age of Lewis XIV. and King Charles II. were in general of a trifling nature, without the appearance of moral tendency, or useful instruction. Since that time, however, somewhat better has been attempted, and a degree of reformation introduced into the spirit of novel writing. Imitations of life and character have been made their principal object. Relations have been professed to be given of the behaviour of persons in particular interesting situations, such as may actually occur in life; by means of which, what is laudable or defective in character and conduct, may be pointed out, and placed in a useful light. Upon this plan, the French have produced some compositions of considerable merit. Gil Blas, by Le Sage, is a book full of good sense, and instructive knowledge of the world. The works of Marivaux, especially his Marianne, discover great refinement of thought, great penetration into human nature, and paint with a very delicate pencil, some of the nicest shades and features in the distinction of characters. The Nouvelle Heloïse of Rousseau is a production of a very singular kind; in many of the events which are related, improbable and unnatural; in some of the details tedious, and for some of the scenes which are described justly blameable; but withal, for the power of eloquence, for tenderness of sentiment, for ardour of passion, entitled to rank among the highest productions of fictitious history.

In this kind of writing we are, it must be confessed, in Great Bri-

tain, inferior to the French. We neither relate so agreeably, nor draw characters with so much delicacy; yet we are not without some performances which discover the strength of the British genius. No fiction in any language, was ever better supported than the Adventures of Robinson Crusoe. While it is carried on with that appearance of truth and simplicity, which takes a strong hold of the imagination of all readers, it suggests, at the same time, very useful instruction; by shewing how much the native powers of man may be exerted for surmounting the difficulties of any external situation. Mr. Fielding's Novels are highly distinguished for their humour; a humour which, if not of the most refined and delicate kind, is original, and peculiar to himself. The characters which he draws are lively and natural, and marked with the strokes of a bold pencil. The general scope of his stories is favourable to humanity and goodness of heart; and in Tom Jones, his greatest work, the artful conduct of the fable, and the subserviency of all the incidents to the winding-up of the whole, deserve much praise. The most moral of all our novel writers is Richardson, the author of Clarissa, a writer of excellent intentions, and of very considerable capacity and genius; did he not possess the unfortunate talent of spinning out pieces of amusement into an immeasurable length. The trivial performances which daily appear in public under the title of Lives, Adventures, and Histories, by anonymous authors, if they be often innocent, yet are most commonly insipid; and though in the general it ought to be admitted that characteristical novels, formed upon nature and upon life, without extravagance, and without licentiousness, might furnish an agreeable and useful entertainment to the mind; yet considering the manner in which these writings have been, for the most part, conducted, it must also be confessed, that they oftener tend to dissipation and idleness, than to any good purpose. Let us now, therefore, make our retreat from these regions of fiction.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

NATURE OF POETRY—ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS—VERSIFICATION.

I HAVE now finished my observations on the different kinds of writing in prose. What remains is, to treat of Poetical Composition. Before entering on the consideration of any of its particular kinds, I design this Lecture as an introduction to the subject of poetry in general; wherein I shall treat of its nature, give an account of its origin, and make some observations on versification, or poetical numbers

Our first inquiry must be, What is poetry? and wherein does it differ from prose? [illegible] answer to this question is not so easy as might at first be i[illegible]; and critics have differed and disputed much concerning the proper definition of poetry. Some have made its essence to consist in fiction, and support their opinion by the authority of Aristotle and Plato. But this is certainly too limited a definition; for though fiction may have a great share in many poetical compositions, yet many subjects of poetry may not be feigned; as where the poet describes objects which actually exist, or pours forth the real sentiments of his own heart. Others have made the characteristic of poetry to lie in imitation. But this is altogether loose; for several other arts imitate as well as poetry; and an imitation of human manners and characters, may be carried on in the humblest prose, no less than in the more lofty poetic strain.

The most just and comprehensive definition which, I think, can be given of poetry, is, 'That it is the language of passion, or of enlivened imagination, formed, most commonly, into regular numbers.' The historian, the orator, the philosopher, address themselves, for the most part, primarily to the understanding: their direct aim is to inform, to persuade, or to instruct. But the primary aim of a poet is to please, and to move; and, therefore, it is to the imagination, and the passions, that he speaks. He may, and he ought to have it in his view, to instruct and to reform; but it is indirectly, and by pleasing and moving, that he accomplishes this end. His mind is supposed to be animated by some interesting object which fires his imagination, or engages his passions; and which, of course, communicates to his style a peculiar elevation suited to his ideas; very different from that mode of expression, which is natural to the mind in its calm, ordinary state. I have added to my definition, that this language of passion, or imagination, is formed, 'most commonly,' into regular numbers; because, though versification be, in general, the exterior distinction of poetry, yet there are some forms of verse so loose and familiar, as to be hardly distinguishable from prose; such as the verse of Terence's Comedies; and there is also a species of prose, so measured in its cadence, and so much raised in its tone, as to approach very near to poetical numbers; such as the Telemachus of Fenelon; and the English translation of Ossian. The truth is, verse and prose, on some occasions, run into one another, like light and shade. It is hardly possible to determine the exact limit where eloquence ends, and poetry begins; nor is there any occasion for being very precise about the boundaries, as long as the nature of each is understood. These are the minutiæ of criticism, concerning which frivolous writers are always disposed to squabble; but which deserve not any particular discussion.

The truth and justness of the definition, which I have given of poetry, will appear more fully from the account which I am now to give of its origin, and which will tend to throw light on much of what I am afterward to deliver, concerning its various kinds.

The Greeks, ever fond of attributing to their own nation the invention of all sciences and arts, have ascribed the origin of poetry to Orpheus, Linus, and Musæus. There were, perhaps, such persons as these, who were the first distinguished bards in the Grecian countries. But long before such names were heard of, and among nations where they were never known, poetry existed. It is a great error to imagine, that poetry and music are arts which belong only to polished nations. They have their foundation in the nature of man, and belong to all nations, and to all ages; though, like other arts founded in nature, they have been more cultivated, and, from a concurrence of favourable circumstances, carried to greater perfection in some countries, than in others. In order to explore the rise of poetry, we must have recourse to the deserts and the wilds; we must go back to the age of hunters and of shepherds; to the highest antiquity; and to the simplest form of manners among mankind.

It has been often said, and the concurring voice of all antiquity affirms, that poetry is older than prose. But in what sense this seemingly strange paradox holds true, has not always been well understood. There never, certainly, was any period of society in which men conversed together in poetical numbers. It was in very humble and scanty prose, as we may easily believe, that the first tribes carried on intercourse among themselves, relating to the wants and necessities of life. But from the very beginning of society, there were occasions on which they met together for feasts, sacrifices, and public assemblies; and on all such occasions, it is well known, that music, song, and dance, made their principal entertainment. It is chiefly in America, that we have had the opportunity of being made acquainted with men in their savage state. We learn from the particular and concurring accounts of travellers, that, among all the nations of that vast continent, especially among the Northern tribes, with whom we have had most intercourse, music and song are, at all their meetings, carried on with an incredible degree of enthusiasm; that the chiefs of the tribe are those who signalize themselves most on such occasions; that it is in songs they celebrate their religious rites; that, by these, they lament their public and private calamities, the death of friends, or the loss of warriors; express their joy on their victories; celebrate the great actions of their nation, and their heroes; excite each other to perform great exploits in war, or to suffer death and torments with unshaken constancy.

Here then we see the first beginnings of poetic composition in

those rude effusions, which the enthusiasm of fancy or passion suggested to untaught men, when roused by interesting events, and by their meeting together in public assemblies. Two particulars would early distinguish this language of song, from that in which they conversed on the common occurrences of life; namely, an unusual arrangement of words, and the employment of bold figures of speech. It would invert words, or change them from that order in which they are commonly placed, to that which most suited the train in which they rose in the speaker's imagination: or which was most accommodated to the cadence of the passion by which he was moved. Under the influence too of any strong emotion, objects do not appear to us such as they really are, but such as passion makes us see them. We magnify and exaggerate; we seek to interest all others in what causes our emotion; we compare the least things to the greatest; we call upon the absent as well as the present, and even address ourselves to things inanimate. Hence, in congruity with those various movements of the mind, arise those turns of expression, which we now distinguish, by the learned names of hyperbole, prosopopœia, simile, &c. but which are no other than the native original language of poetry among the most barbarous nations.

Man is both a poet and a musician by nature. The same impulse which prompted the enthusiastic poetic style, prompted a certain melody, or modulation of sound, suited to the emotions of joy or grief, of admiration, love, or anger. There is a power in sound, which, partly from nature, partly from habit and association, makes such pathetic impressions on the fancy, as delight even the most wild barbarians. Music and poetry, therefore, had the same rise; they were prompted by the same occasions; they were united in song; and, as long as they continued united, they tended, without doubt, mutually to heighten and exalt each other's power. The first poets sung their own verses: and hence the beginning of what we call versification, or words arranged in a more artful order than prose, so as to be suited to some tune or melody. The liberty of transposition, or inversion, which the poetic style, as I observed, would naturally assume, made it easier to form the words into some sort of numbers that fell in with the music of the song. Very harsh and uncouth, we may easily believe, these numbers would be at first. But the pleasure was felt; it was studied; and versification, by degrees, passed into an art.

It appears from what has been said, that the first compositions which were either recorded by writing or transmitted by tradition, could be no other than poetical compositions. No other but these, could draw the attention of men in their rude uncivilized state. Indeed, they knew no other. Cool reasoning and plain discourse had no power to attract savage tribes, addicted only to

hunting and war. There was nothing that ---ld either rouse the speaker to pour himself forth, or draw the c o listen, but the high powers of passion, of music, and of song. This vehicle, therefore, and no other, could be employed by chiefs and legislators, when they meant to instruct or to animate their tribes. There is, likewise, a farther h compositions only could be transmitted to posterity; because, before writing was invented, songs only could last, and be remembered. The ear gave assistance to the memory, by the help of numbers; fathers repeated and sung them to their children; and by this oral tradition of national ballads, were conveyed all the historical knowledge, and all the instruction, of the first ages.

The earliest accounts which history gives us concerning all nations, bear testimony to these facts. In the first ages of Greece, priests, philosophers, and statesmen, all delivered their instructions in poetry. Apollo, Orpheus, and Amphion, their most ancient bards, are represented as the first tamers of mankind, the first founders of law and civilization. Minos and Thales sung to the lyre the laws which they composed;* and till the age immediately preceding that of Herodotus, history had appeared in no other form than that of poetical tales.

In the same manner, among all other nations, poets and songs are the first objects that make their appearance. Among the Scythian or Gothic nations, many of their kings and leaders were scalders, or poets; and it is from their Runic songs, that the most early writers of their history, such as Saxo-Grammaticus, acknowledge, that they had derived their chief information. Among the Celtic tribes, in Gaul, Britain, and Ireland, we know, in what admiration their bards were held, and what great influence they possessed over the people. They were both poets and musicians, as all the first poets, in every country, were. They were always near the person of the chief or sovereign; they recorded all his great exploits; they were employed as the ambassadors between contending tribes, and their persons were held sacred.

From this deduction it follows, that as we have reason to look for poems and songs among the antiquities of all countries, so we may expect, that in the strain of these there will be a remarkable resemblance, during the primitive periods of every country. The occasions of their being composed, are every where nearly the same. The praises of gods and heroes, the celebration of famed ancestors, the recital of martial deeds, songs of victory, and songs of lamentation over the misfortunes and death of their countrymen, occur among all nations; and the same enthusiasm and fire, the same wild and irregular, but animated composition, concise and glowing style, bold and extravagant figures of speech, are

* Strabo, l. 10.

the general distinguishing characters of all the most ancient original poetry. That strong hyperbolical manner which we have been long accustomed to call the oriental manner of poetry (because some of the earliest poetical productions came to us from the East), is in truth no more oriental than occidental; it is characteristical of an age rather than of a country, and belongs, in some measure, to all nations at that period which first gives rise to music and to song. Mankind never resemble each other, so much as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give birth to the principal distinctions of character among nations, and divert into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners, which descends originally from one spring.

Diversity of climate and of manner of living, will, however, occasion some diversity in the strain of the first poetry of nations; chiefly, according as those nations are of a more ferocious, or of a more gentle spirit; and according as they advance faster or slower in the arts of civilization. Thus we find all the remains of the ancient Gothic poetry remarkably fierce, and breathing nothing but slaughter and blood; while the Peruvian and the Chinese songs turned, from the earliest times, upon milder subjects. The Celtic poetry, in the days of Ossian, though chiefly of the martial kind, yet had attained a considerable mixture of tenderness and refinement; in consequence of the long cultivation of poetry among the Celtæ, by means of a series and succession of bards which had been established for ages. So Lucan informs us:

> Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,
> Laudibus in longum vates diffunditis ævum,
> Plurima securi fudistis carmina Bardi.* [L. i.]

Among the Grecian nations, their early poetry appears to have soon received a philosophical cast, from what we are informed concerning the subjects of Orpheus, Linus, and Musæus, who treated of creation and of chaos, of the generation of the world, and of the rise of things; and we know that the Greeks advanced sooner to philosophy, and proceeded with a quicker pace in all the arts of refinement, than most other nations.

The Arabians and the Persians have always been the greatest poets of the East, and among them, as among other nations, poetry was the earliest vehicle of all their learning and instruction.† The ancient Arabs, we are informed,‡ valued themselves

* You too, ye bards, whom sacred raptures fire
To chaunt your heroes to your country's lyre,
Who consecrate in your immortal strain,
Brave patriot souls in righteous battle slain;
Securely now the youthful task renew,
And noblest themes in deathless songs pursue.—ROWE.

† Vid. V[illegible]e Chardin, chap. de la Poësie des Persans.

‡ Vid. Preliminary Discourse to Sale's translation of the Koran.

much on their metrical compositions, which were of two sorts: the one they compared to loose pearls, and the other to pearls strung. In the former, the sentences or verses were without connexion, and their beauty arose from the elegance of the expression, and the acuteness of the sentiment. The moral doctrines of the Persians were generally comprehended in such independent proverbial apophthegms, formed into verse. In this respect they bear a considerable resemblance to the Proverbs of Solomon; a great part of which book consists of unconnected poetry, like the loose pearls of the Arabians. The same form of composition appears also in the book of Job. The Greeks seem to have been the first who introduced a more regular structure, and closer connexion of parts, into their poetical writings.

During the infancy of poetry all the different kinds of it lay confused, and were mingled in the same composition, according as inclination, enthusiasm, or casual incidents, directed the poet's strain. In the progress of society and arts, they began to assume those different regular forms, and to be distinguished by those different names, under which we now know them. But in the first rude state of poetical effusions, we can easily discern the seeds and beginnings of all the kinds of regular poetry. Odes and hymns of every sort, would naturally be among the first compositions; according as the bards were moved by religious feelings, by exultation, resentment, love, or any other warm sentiment, to pour themselves forth in song. Plaintive or elegiac poetry, would as naturally arise from lamentations over their deceased friends. The recital of the achievements of their heroes, and their ancestors, gave birth to what we now call epic poetry; and as not content with simply reciting these, they would infallibly be led, at some of their public meetings, to represent them, by introducing different bards speaking in the character of their heroes, and answering each other, we find in this the first outlines of tragedy, or dramatic writing.

None of these kinds of poetry, however, were in the first ages of society properly distinguished or separated, as they are now, from each other. Indeed, not only were the different kinds of poetry then mixed together, but all that we now call letters, or composition of any kind, was then blended in one mass. At first, history, eloquence, and poetry, were all the same. Whoever wanted to move or to persuade, to inform or to entertain, his countrymen and neighbours, whatever was the subject, accompanied his sentiment and tales with the melody of song. This was the case in that period of society, when the character and occupations of the husbandman and the builder, the warrior and the statesman, were united in one person. When the progress of society brought on a separation of the different arts and professions of

civil life, it led also by degrees to a separation of the different literary provinces from each other.

The art of writing was in process of time invented; records of past transactions began to be kept; men occupied with the subjects of policy and useful arts, wished now to be instructed and informed, as well as moved. They reasoned and reflected upon the affairs of life; and were interested by what was real, not fabulous, in past transactions. The historian, therefore, now laid aside the buskins of poetry; he wrote in prose, and attempted to give a faithful and judicious relation of former events. The philosopher addressed himself chiefly to the understanding. The orator studied to persuade by reasoning, and retained more or less of the ancient passionate and glowing style according as it was conducive to his purpose. Poetry became now a separate art, calculated chiefly to please, and confined generally to such subjects as related to the imagination and passions. Even its earliest companion, music, was in a great measure divided from it.

These separations brought all the literary arts into a more regular form, and contributed to the exact and accurate cultivation of each. Poetry, however, in its ancient original condition, was perhaps more vigorous than it is in its modern state. It included then, the whole burst of the human mind; the whole exertion of its imaginative faculties. It spoke then the language of passion, and no other; for to passion it owed its birth. Prompted and inspired by objects which to him seemed great, by events which interested his country or his friends, the early bard arose and sung. He sung indeed in wild and disorderly strains; but they were the native effusions of his heart; they were the ardent conceptions of admiration or resentment, of sorrow or friendship, which he poured forth. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the rude and artless strain of the first poetry of all nations, we should often find somewhat that captivates and transports the mind. In after-ages, when poetry became a regular art, studied for reputation and for gain, authors began to affect what they did not feel. Composing coolly in their closets, they endeavoured to imitate passion, rather than to express it; they tried to force their imagination into raptures, or to supply the defect of native warmth, by those artificial ornaments which might give composition a splendid appearance.

The separation of music from poetry, produced consequences not favourable in some respects to poetry, and in many respects hurtful to music.* As long as they remained united, music enlivened and animated poetry, and poetry gave force and expression to musical sound. The music of that early period was, beyond doubt,

* See Dr. Brown's Dissertation on the *Rise, Union, and Separation of Poetry and Music.*

extremely simple; and must have consisted chiefly of such pathetic notes, as the voice could adapt to the words of the song. Musical instruments, such as flutes, and pipes, and a lyre with a very few strings, appear to have been early invented among some nations; but no more was invented by these instruments, than simply to accompany the voice, and to heighten the melody of song. The poet's strain was always heard; and, from many circumstances, it appears, that among the ancient Greeks, as well as among other nations, the bard sung his verses, and played upon his harp or lyre at the same time. In this state, the art of music was, when it produced all those great effects of which we read so much in ancient history. And certain it is, that from simple music only, and from music accompanied with verse or song, we are to look for strong expression and powerful influence over the human mind. When instrumental music came to be studied as a separate art, divested of the poet's song, and formed into the artificial and intricate combinations of harmony, it lost all its ancient power of inflaming the hearers with strong emotions; and sunk into an art of mere amusement, among polished and luxurious nations.

Still, however, poetry preserves, in all countries, some remains of its first and original connexion with music. By being uttered in song, it was formed into numbers, or into an artificial arrangement of words and syllables, very different in different countries; but such as, to the inhabitants of each, seemed most melodious and agreeable in sound. Whence arises that great characteristic of poetry which we now call Verse; a subject which comes next to be treated of.

It is a subject of a curious nature; but as I am sensible, that, were I to pursue it as far as my inclination leads, it would give rise to discussions, which the greater part of readers would consider as minute, I shall confine myself to a few observations upon English versification.

Nations, whose language and pronunciation were of a musical kind, rested their versification chiefly upon the quantities, that is, the length or shortness, of their syllables. Others, who did not make the quantities of their syllables be so distinctly perceived in pronouncing them, rested the melody of their verse upon the number of syllables it contained, upon the proper disposition of accents and pauses in it, and frequently upon that return of corresponding sounds, which we call rhyme. The former was the case with the Greeks and Romans, the latter is the case with us, and with most modern nations. Among the Greeks and Romans, every syllable, or the far greatest number at least, was known to have a fixed and determined quantity; and their manner of pronouncing rendered this so sensible to the ear, that a long syllable was counted precisely equal in time to two short ones. Upon

this principle, the number of syllables contained in their hexameter verse was allowed to vary. It may extend to 17; it can contain, when regular, no fewer than 13: but the musical time was, notwithstanding, precisely the same in every hexameter verse, and was always equal to that of 12 long syllables. In order to ascertain the regular time of every verse, and the proper mixture and succession of long and short syllables which ought to compose it, were invented, what the grammarians call metrical feet, dactyles, spondees, iambus, &c. By these measures was tried the accuracy of composition in every line, and whether it was so constructed as to complete its proper melody. It was requisite, for instance, that the hexameter verse should have the quantity of its syllables so disposed, that it could be scanned or measured by six metrical feet, which might be either dactyles or spondees (as the musical time of both these is the same), with this restriction only, that the fifth foot was regularly to be a dactyle, and the last a spondee.*

The introduction of these feet into English verse, would be altogether out of place; for the genius of our language corresponds not in this respect to the Greek or Latin. I say not, that we have no regard to quantity, or to long and short, in pronouncing. Many words we have, especially our words consisting of several syllables, where the quantity, or the long and short syllables, are invariably fixed; but great numbers we have also, where the quantity is left altogether loose. This is the case with a great part of our words consisting of two syllables, and with almost all our monosyllables. In general, the difference made between long and short syllables, in our manner of pronouncing them, is so very

* Some writers imagine, that the feet in Latin verse were intended to correspond to bars in music, and to form musical intervals or distinctions, sensible to the ear in the pronunciation of the line. Had this been the case, every kind of verse must have had a peculiar order of feet appropriated to it. But the common prosodies shew, that there are several forms of Latin verse which are capable of being measured indifferently, by a series of feet of very different kinds. For instance, what is called the Asclepedæan verse (in which the first Ode of Horace is written) may be scanned either by a spondæus, two choriambuses, and a pyrrichius; or by a spondeus, a dactylus succeeded by a cæsura, and two dactyluses. The common pentameter, and some other forms of verse, admit the like varieties; and yet the melody of the verse remains always the same, though it be scanned by different feet. This proves, that the metrical feet were not sensible in the pronunciation of the line, but were intended only to regulate its construction; or applied as measures, to try whether the succession of long and short syllables was such as suited the melody of the verse: and as feet of different kinds could sometimes be applied for this purpose, hence it happened, that some forms of verse were capable of being scanned in different ways. For measuring the hexameter line, no other feet were found so proper as dactyles and spondees, and therefore by these it is uniformly scanned. But no ear is sensible of the termination of each foot, in reading an hexameter line. From a misapprehension of this matter, I apprehend that confusion has sometimes arisen among writers, in treating of the prosody both of Latin and of English verse.

inconsiderable, and so much liberty is left us for making them either long or short at pleasure, that mere quantity is of very little effect in English versification. The only perceptible difference among our syllables, arises from some of them being uttered with that stronger percussion of voice, which we call accent. This accent does not always make the syllable longer, but gives it more force of sound only; and it is upon a certain order and succession of accented and unaccented syllables, infinitely more than upon their being long or short, that the melody of our verse depends. If we take any of Mr. Pope's lines, and in reciting them alter the quantity of the syllables, as far as our quantities are sensible, the music of the verse will not be much injured: whereas, if we do not accent the syllables according as the verse dictates, its melody will be totally destroyed.*

Our English heroic verse is of what may be called an iambic structure; that is, composed of a succession, nearly alternate, of syllables, not short and long, but unaccented and accented. With regard to the place of these accents, however, some liberty is admitted, for the sake of variety. Very often, though not always, the line begins with an unaccented syllable; and sometimes in the course of it two unaccented syllables follow each other. But in general, there are either five, or four, accented syllables in each line. The number of syllables is ten, unless where an Alexandrian verse is occasionally admitted. In verses, not Alexandrian, instances occur where the line appears to have more than the limited number. But in such instances I apprehend it will be found, that some of the liquid syllables are so slurred in pronouncing, as to bring the verse, with respect to its effect upon the ear, within the usual bounds.

Another essential circumstance in the constitution of our verse, is the cæsural pause, which falls towards the middle of each line. Some pause of this kind, dictated by the melody, is found in the verse of most nations. It is found, as might be shewn, in the Latin hexameter. In the French heroic verse, it is very sensible. That is a verse of twelve syllables, and in every line, just after the sixth syllable, there falls regularly and indispensably, a cæsural pause, dividing the line into two equal hemistrichs. For example, in the first lines of Boileau's Epistle to the King.:—

* See this well illustrated in Lord Monboddo's Treatise of *the Origin and Progress of Language*, vol. ii. under the head of the prosody of language. He shews that this is not only the constitution of our own verse, but that by our manner of reading Latin verse, we make its music nearly the same. For we certainly do not pronounce it according to the ancient quantities, so as to make the musical time of one long syllable equal to two short ones; but according to a succession of accented and unaccented syllables, only mixed in a ratio different from that of our own verse. No Roman could possibly understand our pronunciation.

Jeune et vaillant heros | dont la haute sagesse
N'est point le fruit tardif | d'une lente vieillesse,
Qui seul sans Ministre | à l'example des Dieux
Soutiens tout par toi-meme | et vois tous par tes yeux.

In this strain all their verses proceed; the one half of the line always answering to the other, and the same chime returning incessantly on the ear without intermission or change; which is certainly a defect in their verse, and unfits it so very much for the freedom and dignity of heroic poetry. On the other hand, it is a distinguishing advantage of our English verse, that it allows the pause to be varied through four different syllables in the line. The pause may fall after the fourth, fifth, the sixth, or the seventh syllable; and according as the pause is placed after one or other of these syllables, the melody of the verse is much changed, its air and cadence are diversified. By this means, uncommon richness and variety are added to English versification.

When the pause falls earliest, that is, after the fourth syllable, the briskest melody is thereby formed, and the most spirited air given to the line. In the following lines of the Rape of the Lock, Mr. Pope has, with exquisite propriety, suited the construction of the verse to the subject.

On her white breast | a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss | and infidels adore;
Her lively looks | a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes | and as unfix'd as those.
Favours to none | to all she smiles extends,
Oft she rejects | but never once offends.

When the pause falls after the fifth syllable, which divides the line into two equal portions, the melody is sensibly altered. The verse loses that brisk and sprightly air, which it had with the former pause, and becomes more smooth, gentle, and flowing.

Eternal sunshine | of the spotless mind,
Each prayer accepted | and each wish resigned

When the pause proceeds to follow the sixth syllable, the tenor of the music becomes solemn and grave. The verse marches now with a more slow and measured pace, than in either of the two former cases.

The wrath of Peleus' son | the direful spring
Of all the Grecian woes | O goddess, sing!

But the grave solemn cadence becomes still more sensible, when the pause falls after the seventh syllable, which is the nearest place to the end of the line that it can occupy. This kind of verse occurs the seldomest, but has a happy effect in diversifying the melody. It produces that slow Alexandrian air, which is finely suited to a close; and for this reason, such lines almost never occur together, but are used in finishing the couplet.

And in the smooth description | murmur still
Long loved, adored ideas! | all adieu.

I have taken my examples from verses in rhyme; because in these, our versification is subjected to the strictest law. As blank verse is of a freer kind, and naturally is read with less cadence or tone, the pauses in it, and the effect of them, are not always so sensible to the ear. It is constructed, however, entirely upon the same principles, with respect to the place of the pause. There are some, who, in order to exalt the variety and the power of our heroic verse, have maintained that it admits of musical pauses, not only after those four syllables where I assigned their place, but after any one syllable in the verse indifferently, where the sense directs it to be placed. This, in my opinion, is the same thing as to maintain that there is no pause at all belonging to the natural melody of the verse; since, according to this notion, the pause is formed entirely to the meaning, not by the music. But this I apprehend to be contrary both to the nature of versification. and to the experience of every good ear.* Those certainly are the happiest lines, wherein the pause, prompted by the melody, coin cides in some degree with that of the sense, or at least does not tend to spoil or interrupt the meaning. Wherever any opposition between the music and the sense chances to take place, I observed before, in treating of pronunciation or delivery, that the proper method of reading these lines, is to read them according as the sense dictates, neglecting or slurring the cæsural pause, which renders the line less graceful indeed, but, however, does not entirely destroy its sound.

Our blank verse possesses great advantages, and is indeed a noble, bold, and disencumbered species of versification. The principal defect in rhyme, is the full close which it forces upon the ear, at the end of every couplet. Blank verse is freed from this, and allows the lines to run into each other with as great liberty as the Latin hexameter permits, perhaps with greater. Hence it is particularly suited to subjects of dignity and force, which demand more free and manly numbers than rhyme. The constraint and strict regularity of rhyme, are unfavourable to the sublime, or to the highly pathetic strain. An epic poem, or a tragedy, would be fettered and degraded by it. It is best adapted to compositions of a temperate strain, where no particular vehemence is required in the

* In the Italian heroic verse employed by Tasso in his Gierusalemme, and Ariosto in his Orlando, the pauses are of the same varied nature with those which I have shewn to belong to English versification, and fall after the same four syllables in the line. Marmontel, in his Poëtique Françoise, vol. i. p. 269. takes notice that this construction of verse is common to the Italians and the English; and defends the uniformity of the French cæsural pause upon this ground, that the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes, furnishes sufficient variety to the French poetry; whereas the change of movement occasioned by the four different pauses in English and Italian verse, produces, according to him, too great diversity. On the head of pauses in English versification, see the Elements of Criticism, chap. 18. sect. 4.

sentiments, nor great sublimity in the style; such as pastorals, elegies, epistles, satires, &c. To these it communicates that degree of elevation which is proper for them; and without any other assistance sufficiently distinguishes the style from prose. He who should write such poems in blank verse, would render his work harsh and unpleasing. In order to support a poetical style, he would be obliged to affect a pomp of language, unsuitable to the subject.

Though I join in opinion with those, who think that rhyme finds its proper place in the middle, but not in the higher regions of poetry, I can by no means join in the invectives which some have poured out against it, as if it were a mere barbarous jingling of sounds, fit only for children, and owing to nothing but the corruption of taste in the monkish ages. Rhyme might indeed be barbarous in Latin or Greek verse, because these languages, by the sonorousness of their words, by their liberty of transposition and inversion, by their fixed quantities and musical pronunciation, could carry on the melody of verse without its aid. But it does not follow, that therefore it must be barbarous in the English language, which is destitute of these advantages. Every language has powers, and graces, and music, peculiar to itself; and what is becoming in one, would be ridiculous in another. Rhyme was barbarous in Latin; and an attempt to construct English verses after the form of hexameters, and pentameters, and sapphics, is as barbarous among us. It is not true, that rhyme is merely a monkish invention. On the contrary, it has obtained under different forms, in the versification of most known nations. It is found in the ancient poetry of the northern nations of Europe; it is said to be found among the Arabs, the Persians, the Indians, and the Americans. This shews that there is something in the return of similar sounds, which is grateful to the ears of most part of mankind. And if any one, after reading Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock, or Eloisa to Abelard, shall not admit our rhyme, with all its varieties of pauses, to carry both elegance and sweetness of sound, his ear must be pronounced to be of a very peculiar kind.

The present form of our English heroic rhyme in couplets, is a modern species of versification. The measure generally used in the days of Queen Elizabeth, King James, and King Charles I. was the stanza of eight lines, such as Spenser employs, borrowed from the Italian; a measure very constrained and artificial. Waller was the first who brought couplets into vogue; and Dryden afterward established the usage. Waller first smoothed our verse; Dryden perfected it. Mr. Pope's versification has a peculiar character. It is flowing and smooth in the highest degree; far more laboured and correct than that of any who went before him. He introduced one considerable change into heroic verse, by totally throwing aside the

triplets, or three lines rhyming together, in which Mr. Dryden abounded. Dryden's versification, however, has very great merit; and, like all his productions, has much spirit, mixed with carelessness. If not so smooth and correct as Pope's, it is however more varied and easy. He subjects himself less to the rule of closing the sense with the couplet; and frequently takes the liberty of making his couplets run into one another, with somewhat of the freedom of blank verse.

LECTURE XXXIX.

PASTORAL POETRY—LYRIC POETRY

In the last Lecture, I gave an account of the rise and progress of poetry, and made some observations on the nature of English versification. I now proceed to treat of the chief kinds of poetical composition, and of the critical rules that relate to them. I shall follow that order which is most simple and natural, beginning with the lesser forms of poetry, and ascending from them to the epic and dramatic, as the most dignified. This Lecture shall be employed on Pastoral and Lyric Poetry

Though I begin with the consideration of pastoral poetry, it is not because I consider it as one of the earliest forms of poetical composition. On the contrary, I am of opinion that it was not cultivated as a distinct species, or subject of writing, until society had advanced in refinement. Most authors have indeed indulged the fancy, that because the life which mankind at first led was rural, therefore their first poetry was pastoral, or employed in the celebration of rural scenes and objects. I make no doubt, that it would borrow many of its images and allusions from those natural objects with which men were best acquainted; but I am persuaded that the calm and tranquil scenes of rural felicity were not, by any means, the first objects which inspired that strain of composition which we now call poetry. It was inspired, in the first periods of every nation, by events and objects which roused men's passions, or, at least, awakened their wonder and admiration. The actions of their gods and heroes, their own exploits in war, the successes or misfortunes of their countrymen and friends, furnished the first themes to the bards of every country. What was of a pastoral kind in their compositions was incidental only. They did not think of choosing for their theme the tranquillity and the pleasures of the country, as long as these were daily and familiar objects to them. It was not till men had begun to be assembled in great cities, after the distinctions of rank and station were formed, and

the bustle of courts and large societies was known, that pastoral poetry assumed its present form. Men then began to look back upon the more simple and innocent life which their forefathers led, or which, at least, they fancied them to have led: they looked back upon it with pleasure; and in those rural scenes, and pastoral occupations, imagining a degree of felicity to take place superior to what they now enjoyed, conceived the idea of celebrating it in poetry. It was in the court of King Ptolemy that Theocritus wrote the first pastorals with which we are accquainted; and in the court of Augustus he was imitated by Virgil.

But whatever may have been the origin of pastoral poetry, it is, undoubtedly, a natural and very agreeable form of poetical composition. It recalls to our imagination those gay scenes, and pleasing views of nature, which commonly are the delight of our childhood and youth; and to which, in more advanced years, the greatest part of men recur with pleasure. It exhibits to us a life with which we are accustomed to associate the ideas of peace, of leisure, and of innocence; and therefore we readily set open our heart to such representations as promise to banish from our thoughts the cares of the world, and to transport us into calm Elysian regions. At the same time, no subject seems to be more favourable to poetry. Amidst rural objects, nature presents, on all hands, the finest field for description; and nothing appears to flow more of its own accord, into poetical numbers, than rivers and mountains, meadows and hills, flocks and trees, and shepherds void of care. Hence this species of poetry has, at all times, allured many readers, and excited many writers. But, notwithstanding the advantages it possesses, it will appear, from what I have farther to observe upon it, that there is hardly any species of poetry which is more difficult to be carried to perfection, or in which fewer writers have excelled

Pastoral life may be considered in three different views; either such as it now actually is; when the state of shepherds is reduced to be a mean, servile, and laborious state; when their employments are become disagreeable, and their ideas gross and low: or such as we may suppose it once to have been, in the more early and simple ages, when it was a life of ease and abundance; when the wealth of men consisted chiefly in flocks and herds, and the shepherd, though unrefined in his manners, was respectable in his state: or, lastly, such as it never was, and never can in reality be, when, to the ease, innocence, and simplicity of the early ages, we attempt to add the polished taste and cultivated manners of modern times. Of these three states, the first is too gross and mean, the last too refined and unnatural, to be made the groundwork of pastoral poetry. Either of these extremes is a rock upon which the poet will split, if he approach too near it. We shall be disgusted if he

give us too much of the servile employments and low ideas of actual peasants, as Theocritus is censured for having sometimes done; and if, like some of the French and Italian writers of pastorals, he makes his shepherds discourse as if they were courtiers and scholars, he then retains the name only, but wants the spirit, of pastoral poetry.

He must, therefore, keep in the middle station between these. He must form to himself the idea of a rural state, such as in certain periods of society may have actually taken place, where there was ease, equality, and innocence; where shepherds were gay and agreeable, without being learned or refined; and plain and artless, without being gross and wretched. The great charm of pastoral poetry arises from the view which it exhibits of the tranquillity and happiness of a rural life. This pleasing illusion, therefore, the poet must carefully maintain. He must display to us all that is agreeable in that state, but hide whatever is displeasing.* Let him paint its simplicity and innocence to the full, but cover its rudeness and misery. Distresses, indeed, and anxieties, he may attribute to it; for it would be perfectly unnatural to suppose any condition of human life to be without them; but they must be of such a nature as not to shock the fancy with any thing peculiarly disgusting in the pastoral life. The shepherd may well be afflicted for the displeasure of his mistress, or for the loss of a favourite lamb. It is a sufficient recommendation of any state, to have only such evils as these to deplore. In short, it is the pastoral life somewhat embellished and beautified, at least seen on its fairest side only, that the poet ought to present to us. But let him take care that, in embellishing nature, he do not altogether disguise her; or pretend to join with rural simplicity and happiness,

* In the following beautiful lines of the first eclogue Virgil has, in the true spirit of a pastoral poet, brought together as agreeable an assemblage of images of rural pleasure as can any where be found:

Fortunate senex! hic inter flumina nota,
Et fontes sacros frigus captabis opacum.
Hinc tibi, quæ semper vicino ab limite sepes,
Hyblæis apibus, florem depasta salicti,
Sæpe levi somnum suadebit inire susurro.
Hinc altâ sub rupe canet frondator ad auras;
Nec tamen interea, raucæ, tua cura, palumbes,
Nec gemere aëriâ cessabit turtur ab ulmo.

Happy old man! here mid th' accustom'd streams
And sacred springs you'll shun the scorching beams;
While from yon willow fence, thy pasture's bound,
The bees that suck their flowery stores around,
Shall sweetly mingle, with the whispering boughs,
Their lulling murmurs, and invite repose.
While from steep rocks the pruner's song is heard;
Nor the soft cooing dove, thy fav'rite bird,
Meanwhile shall cease to breathe her melting strain,
Nor turtles from th' aërial elms to plain.—Warton.

such improvements as are unnatural and foreign to it. If it be not exactly real life which he presents to us, it must, however, be somewhat that resembles it. This, in my opinion, is the general idea of pastoral poetry. But, in order to examine it more particularly, let us consider, first, the scenery; next, the characters; and lastly, the subjects and actions which this sort of composition should exhibit.

As to the scene, it is clear, that it must always be laid in the country, and much of the poet's merit depends on describing it beautifully. Virgil is, in this respect, excelled by Theocritus, whose descriptions of natural beauties are richer, and more picturesque than those of the other.* In every pastoral, a scene or rural prospect should be distinctly drawn, and set before us. It is not enough, that we have those unmeaning groups of violets and roses, of birds, and brooks, and breezes, which our common pastoral-mongers throw together, and which are perpetually recurring

* What rural scenery, for instance, can be painted in more lively colours than the following description exhibits?

——— ἔν τε βαθείαις
Ἀδείας σχίνοιο χαμευνίσιν ἐκλίνθημες
Ἔν τε νεοτμάτοισι γεγαθότες οἰναρέοισι.
Πολλαὶ δ' ἄμμιν ὕπερθε κατα κρατὸς δονέοντο,
Αἴγειροι πτελέαι τε· το δ' ἐγγύθεν ἱερὸν ὕδωρ
Νυμφᾶν ἐξ ἄντροιο κατειβόμενον κελαρυσδεν.
Ταὶ δὲ ποτι σκιεραῖς ὀροδαμνίσιν αἰθαλίωνες
Τέττιγες λαλαγεῦντες ἔχον πονον. ἁ δ' ὀλολυγὼν,
Τηλόθεν ἐν πυκιναῖσι βάτων τρύζεσκεν ἀκάνθαις.
Ἀειδον κόρυδοι και ἀκανθιδες ἔστενε τρύγων·
Πωτῶντο ξουθαὶ περι πίδακας αμφι μέλισσαι.
Πάντ' ὦσδεν θέρεος μαλα πίονος, ὦσδε δ' ὀπώρης·
Ὄχναι μὲν πὰρ ποσσὶ παρα πλευραισι δε μαλα
Δαψιλέως ἄμμιν ἐκυλίνδετο· τοι δ' εκεχυντο
Ὄρπακες βραβύλοισι καταβρίθοντες ἔραζε.

THEOCRIT. Idyll. vii. 132.

——— on soft beds recline
Of lentisk, and young branches of the vine:
Poplars and elms above, their foliage spread,
Lent a cool shade, and waved the breezy head;
Below, a stream, from the nymph's sacred cave,
In free meanders led its murm'ring wave.
In the warm sun-beams, verdant shades among,
Shrill grasshoppers renew'd their plaintive song;
At distance far, concealed in shades, alone,
Sweet Philomela pour'd her tuneful moan;
The lark, the goldfinch, warbled lays of love,
And sweetly pensive, coo'd the turtle dove:
While honey bees, for ever on the wing,
Humm'd round the flowers, or sipp'd the silver spring;
The rich, ripe season, gratified the sense
With summer's sweets, and autumn's redolence.
Apples and pears lay strew'd in heaps around,
And the plum's loaded branches kiss'd the ground.---FAWKES.

upon us without variation. A good poet ought to give us such a landscape, as a painter could copy after. His object must be particularized: the stream, the rock, or the tree, must, each of them, stand forth, so as to make a figure in the imagination, and to give us a pleasing conception of the place where we are. A single object, happily introduced, will sometimes distinguish and characterize a whole scene; such as the antique rustic sepulchre, a very beautiful object in a landscape; which Virgil has set before us, and which he has taken from Theocritus:

> Hinc adeo media est nobis via; jamque sepulchrum
> Incipit apparere Bianoris; hic ubi densas
> Agricolæ stringunt frondes——— ECL. ix.*

Not only in professed descriptions of the scenery, but in the frequent allusions to natural objects, which occur, of course, in pastorals, the poet must, above all things, study variety. He must diversify his face of nature, by presenting to us new images; or otherwise, he will soon become insipid with those known topics of description, which were original, it is true, in the first poets, who copied them from nature, but which are now worn threadbare by incessant imitation. It is also incumbent on him to suit the scenery to the subject of the pastoral; and, according as it is of a gay or a melancholy kind, to exhibit nature under such forms as may correspond with the emotions or sentiments which he describes. Thus Virgil, in his second Eclogue, which contains the lamentation of a despairing lover, gives, with propriety, a gloomy appearance to the scene:

> Tantum inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, fagos,
> Assiduè veniebat; ibi hæc incondita solus
> Montibus et sylvis studio jactabat inani.†

With regard to the characters, or persons, which are proper to be introduced into pastorals, it is not enough that they be persons residing in the country. The adventures, or the discourses, of courtiers or citizens, in the country, are not what we look for in such writing; we expect to be entertained by shepherds, or persons wholly engaged in rural occupations; whose innocence and freedom from the cares of the world may, in our imagination, form an agreeable contrast with the manners and characters of those who are engaged in the bustle of life.

One of the principal difficulties which here occurs has been already hinted; that of keeping the exact medium between too

*——To our mid journey are we come,
I see the top of old Bianor's tomb;
Here Mæris, where the swains thick branches prune,
And strew their leaves, our voices let us tune.---WARTON.

† 'Mid shades of thickest beech he pined alone,
To the wild woods and mountains made his moan;
Still day by day, in incoherent strains,
'Twas all he could, despairing told his pains.---WARTON.

much rusticity on the one hand, and too much refinement on the other.* The shepherd, assuredly, must be plain and unaffected in his manner of thinking, on all subjects. An amiable simplicity must be the groundwork of his character. At the same time, there is no necessity for his being dull and insipid. He may have good sense and reflection; he may have sprightliness and vivacity; he may have very tender and delicate feelings; since these are, more or less, the portion of men in all ranks of life; and since, undoubtedly, there was much genius in the world, before there were learning or arts to refine it. But then he must not subtilize; he must not deal in general reflections, and abstract reasoning; and still less in the points and conceits of an affected gallantry, which surely belong not to his character and situation. Some of these conceits are the chief blemishes of the Italian pastorals, which are otherwise beautiful. When Aminta, in Tasso, is disentangling his mistress's hair from the tree to which a savage had bound it, he is represented as saying: 'Cruel tree! how couldst thou injure that lovely hair which did thee so much honour? thy rugged trunk was not worthy of such lovely knots. What advantage have the servants of love, if those precious chains are common to them, and to the trees?'* Such strained sentiments as these, ill befit the woods. Rural personages are supposed to speak the language of plain sense, and natural feelings. When they describe or relate, they do it with simplicity, and naturally allude to rural circumstances; as in those beautiful lines of one of Virgil's eclogues:

> Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala
> (Dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem;
> Alter ab undecimo tum me jam ceperat annus,
> Jam fragiles poteram a terra contingere ramos.
> Ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error.†

In another passage, he makes a shepherdess throw an apple at her lover:

> Tum fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri.‡

> Gia di nodi si bei non era degno
> Cosi rovido tronco; or che vantaggio
> Hanno i servi d'amor, se lor commune
> E'con le piante il pretioso laccio?
> Pianta crudel! potesti quel bel crine
> Offender, tu, ch'a te feo tanto onore? ATTO SC. III. i

> Once with your mother to our fields you came
> For dewy apples; thence I date my flame;
> The choicest fruit I pointed to your view,
> Though young, my raptured soul was fix'd on you;
> The boughs I just could reach with little arms;
> But then, even then, could feel thy powerful charms
> O, how I gazed, in pleasing transport tost!
> How glow'd my heart in sweet delusion lost! WARTON

> My Phyllis me with pelted apples plies;
> Then, tripping to the wood, the wanton hires,
> And wishes to be seen before she flies. DRYDEN

This is *naïve*, as the French express it, and perfectly suited to pastoral manners. Mr. Pope wanted to imitate this passage, and, as he thought, to improve upon it. He does it thus:

> The sprightly Sylvia trips along the green,
> She runs; but hopes she does not run unseen;
> While a kind glance at her pursuer flies,
> How much at variance are her feet and eyes!

This falls far short of Virgil; the natural and pleasing simplicity of the description is destroyed, by the quaint and affected turn in the last line: 'How much at variance are her feet and eyes!'

Supposing the poet to have formed correct ideas concerning his pastoral characters and personages; the next inquiry is, About what is he to employ them? and what are to be the subjects of his eclogues? For it is not enough, that he gives us shepherds discoursing together. Every good poem, of every kind, ought to have a subject which should, in some way, interest us. Now, here, I apprehend, lies the chief difficulty of pastoral writing. The active scenes of country life either are, or to most describers appear to be, too barren of incidents. The state of a shepherd, or a person occupied in rural employments only, is exposed to few of those accidents and revolutions which render his situation interesting, or produce curiosity or surprise. The tenor of his life is uniform. His ambition is conceived to be without policy, and his love without intrigue. Hence it is, that, of all poems, the most meagre commonly in the subject, and the least diversified in the strain, is the pastoral. From the first lines, we can, generally, guess at all that is to follow. It is either a shepherd who sits down solitary by a brook, to lament the absence or cruelty of his mistress, and to tell us how the trees wither, and the flowers droop, now that she is gone; or we have two shepherds who challenge one another to sing, rehearsing alternate verses, which have little either of meaning or subject, till the judge rewards one with a studded crook, and another with a beechen bowl. To the frequent repetition of common-place topics, of this sort, which have been thrummed over by all eclogue writers since the days of Theocritus, and Virgil, is owing much of that insipidity which prevails in pastoral compositions.

I much question, however, whether this insipidity be not owing to the fault of the poets, and to their barren and slavish imitation of the ancient pastoral topics, rather than to the confined nature of the subject. For why may not pastoral poetry take a wider range? Human nature and human passions are much the same in every rank of life; and wherever these passions operate on objects that are within the rural sphere, there may be a proper subject for pastoral. One would indeed choose to remove from this sort of composition the operations of violent and direful passions, and to pre-

sent such only as are consistent with innocence, simplicity, and virtue. But under this limitation, there will still be abundant scope for a careful observer of nature to exert his genius. The various adventures which give occasion to those engaged in country life to display their disposition and temper; the scenes of domestic felicity or disquiet; the attachment of friends and of brothers; the rivalship and competitions of lovers; the unexpected successes or misfortunes of families, might give occasion to many a pleasing and tender incident; and were more of the narrative and sentimental intermixed with the descriptive in this kind of poetry, it would become much more interesting than it now generally is, to the bulk of readers.*

The two great fathers of pastoral poetry are, Theocritus and Virgil. Theocritus was a Sicilian; and as he has laid the scene of his Eclogues in his own country, Sicily became ever afterward a sort of consecrated ground for pastoral poetry. His Idyllia, as he has entitled them, are not all of equal merit, nor indeed are they all pastorals; but some of them, poems of a quite different nature. In such, however, as are properly pastorals, there are many and great beauties. He is distinguished for the simplicity of his sentiments; for the great sweetness and harmony of his numbers, and for the richness of his scenery and description. He is the original of which Virgil is the imitator. For most of Virgil's highest beauties in his Eclogues are copied from Theocritus; in many places he has done nothing more than translate him. He must be allowed, however, to have imitated him with great judgment, and in some respects to have improved upon him. For Theocritus, it cannot be denied, descends sometimes into ideas that are gross and mean, and makes his shepherds abusive and immodest; whereas Virgil is free from offensive rusticity, and at the same time preserves the character of pastoral simplicity. The same distinction obtains between Theocritus and Virgil, as between many other of the Greek and Roman writers. The Greek led the way, followed nature more closely, and shewed more original genius. The Roman discovered more of the polish and correctness of art. We have a few remains of other two Greek poets in the pastoral style, Moschus and Bion, which have very considerable merit; and if they want the simplicity of Theocritus, excel him in tenderness and delicacy.

The modern writers of pastorals have, generally, contented themselves with copying, or imitating, the descriptions and sentiments of the ancient poets. Sannazarius, indeed, a famous Latin poet, in the age of Leo X. attempted a bold innovation. He composed

* The above observations on the barrenness of the common eclogues were written before any translation from the German had made us acquainted in this country with Gesner's Idyls, in which the ideas that had occurred to me for the improvement of pastoral poetry, are fully realized.

piscatory eclogues; changing the scene from woods to the sea, and from the life of shepherds to that of fishermen. But the innovation was so unhappy, that he has gained no followers. For the life of fishermen is, obviously, much more hard and toilsome than that of shepherds, and presents to the fancy much less agreeable images. Flocks, and trees, and flowers, are objects of greater beauty, and more generally relished by men, than fishes and marine productions. Of all the moderns, M. Gesner, a poet of Switzerland, has been the most successful in his pastoral compositions. He has introduced into his Idylls (as he entitles them) many new ideas. His rural scenery is often striking, and his descriptions are lively. He presents pastoral life to us, with all the embellishments of which it is susceptible; but without any excess of refinement. What forms the chief merit of this poet, is, that he writes to the heart; and has enriched the subject of his Idylls with incidents which give rise to much tender sentiment. Scenes of domestic felicity are beautifully painted. The mutual affection of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, as well as of lovers, are displayed in a pleasing and touching manner. From not understanding the language in which M. Gesner writes, I can be no judge of the poetry of his style: but, in the subject and conduct of his pastorals, he appears to me to have outdone all the moderns.

Neither Mr. Pope's, nor Mr. Philips's pastorals do any great honour to the English poetry. Mr. Pope's were composed in his youth; which may be an apology for other faults, but cannot well excuse the barrenness that appears in them. They are written in remarkably smooth and flowing numbers: and this is their chief merit; for there is scarcely any thought in them which can be called his own; scarcely any description, or any image of nature, which has the marks of being original or copied from nature herself; but a repetition of the common images that are to be found in Virgil, and in all poets who write of rural themes. Philips attempted to be more simple and natural than Pope; but he wanted genius to support his attempt, or to write agreeably. He, too, runs on the common and beaten topics; and endeavouring to be simple, he becomes flat and insipid. There was no small competition between these two authors, at the time when their pastorals were published. In some papers of the 'Guardian,' great partiality was shewn to Philips, and high praise bestowed upon him. Mr. Pope, resenting this preference, under a feigned name, procured a paper to be inserted in the 'Guardian,' wherein he seemingly carries on the plan of extolling Philips; but in reality satirises him most severely with ironical praises; and, in an artful covered manner, gives the palm to himself.* About the same

* See Guardian, No. 40.

time, Mr. Gay published his Shepherd's Week, in six pastorals, which are designed to ridicule that sort of simplicity which Philips and his partsians extolled, and are, indeed, an ingenious burlesque of pastoral writing, when it rises no higher than the manners of modern clowns and rustics. Mr. Shenstone's Pastoral Ballad, in four parts, may justly be reckoned, I think, one of the most elegant poems of this kind, which we have in English

I have not yet mentioned one form in which pastoral writing has appeared in later ages, that is, when extended into a play, or regular drama, where plot, characters, and passions, are joined with the simplicity and innocence of rural manners. This is the chief improvement which the moderns have made on this species of composition; and of this nature we have two Italian pieces, which are much celebrated, Guarini's Pastor Fido, and Tasso's Aminta. Both of these possess great beauties, and are entitled to the reputation they have gained. To the latter, the preference seems due, as being less intricate in the plot and conduct, and less strained and affected in the sentiments; and though not wholly free from Italian refinement (of which I already gave one instance, the worst, indeed, that occurs in all the poem), it is, on the whole, a performance of high merit. The strain of the poetry is gentle and pleasing; and the Italian language contributes to add much of that softness, which is peculiarly suited to pastoral.*

* It may be proper to take notice here, that the charge against Tasso for his points and conceits, has sometimes been carried too far. Mr. Addison, for instance, in a paper of the Guardian, censuring his Aminta, gives this example, 'That Sylvia enters adorned with a garland of flowers, and after viewing herself in a fountain, breaks out in a speech to the flowers on her head, and tells them, that she did not wear them to adorn herself, but to make them ashamed.' 'Whoever can bear this,' he adds, 'may be assured that he has no taste for pastoral.' Guard. No. 38. But Tasso's Sylvia, in truth, makes no such ridiculous figure, and we are obliged to suspect that Mr. Addison has not read the Aminta. Daphne, a companion of Sylvia, appears in conversation with Thyrsis, the confidant of Aminta, Sylvia's lover; and in order to shew him, that Sylvia was not so simple, or insensible to her own charms, as she affected to be, gives him this instance; that she had caught her one day adjusting her dress by a fountain, and applying now one flower and now another to her neck; and after comparing their colours with her own, she broke into a smile, as if she had seemed to say, I will wear you, not for my ornaments, but to shew how much you yield to me; and when caught thus admiring herself, she threw away her flowers, and blushed for shame.——This description of the vanity of a rural coquette, is no more than what is natural, and very different from what the author of the Guardian represents it.

This censure on Tasso was not originally Mr. Addison's. Bouhours, in his *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit*, appears to have been the first who gave this misrepresentation of Sylvia's speech, and founded a criticism on it. Fontenelle, in his discourse on pastoral poetry, followed him in this criticism. Mr. Addison, or whoever was the author of that paper in the Guardian, copied from them both. Mr. Warton, in the prefatory discourse to his translation of Virgil's Eclogues, repeats the observation. Sylvia's speech to the flowers, with which she was adorned, is always quoted as the flagrant instance of the false taste of the Italian poets. Whereas, Tasso gives us no such speech of Sylvia's, but only informs us of what her companion supposed her to be thinking, or saying to herself, when she was privately admiring her

I must not omit the mention of another pastoral drama, which will bear being brought into comparison with any composition of this kind in any language; that is, Allan Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd. It is a great disadvantage to this beautiful poem, that it is written in the old rustic dialect of Scotland, which, in a short time, will probably be entirely obsolete, and not intelligible; and it is a farther disadvantage that it is so entirely formed on the rural manners of Scotland, that none but a native of that country can thoroughly understand, or relish it. But though subject to these local disadvantages, which confine its reputation within narrow limits, it is full of so much natural description, and tender sentiments, as would do honour to any poet. The characters are well drawn, the incidents affecting; the scenery and manners lively and just. It affords a strong proof, both of the power which nature and simplicity possess, to reach the heart in every sort of writing; and of the variety of pleasing characters and subjects, with which pastoral poetry, when properly managed, is capable of being enlivened.

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own beauty. After charging so many eminent critics, for having fallen into this strange inaccuracy, from copying one another, without looking into the author whom they censure, it is necessary for me so insert the passage which has occasioned this remark. Daphne speaks thus to Thyrsis:

Hora per dirti il ver, non mi risolvo
Se Silvia è semplicetta, come pare
A le parole, a gli atti. Hier vidi un segno
Che me ne mette in dubbio. Io la trovai
Là presso la cittade in quei gran prati,
Ove fra stagni giace un isoletta,
Sovra essa un lago limpido e tranquillo,
Tutta pendente in atto, che parea
Vagheggiar se medesma, e'nsieme insieme
Chieder consiglio à l'acque, in qual maniera
Dispor dovesse in su la fronte i crini,
E sovra i crini il velo, e sovra'l velo
I fior, che tenea in grembo; e spesso spesso
Hor prendeva un ligustro, hor una rosa,
E l'accostava al bel candido collo,
A le guancie vermiglie, e de colori
Fea paragone; e poi, siccome lieta
De la vittoria lampeggiava un riso
Che parea che dicesse; io pur vi vinco;
Ne porto voi per ornamento mio,
Ma porto voi sol per vergogna vostra,
Perche si veggia quanto mi cedete.
Ma mentre ella s'ornava, e vagheggiava
Rivolsi gli occhi a caso, e si fu accorta
Ch'io di la m'era accorta, e vergognando,
Rizzossi tosto, e i fior lasciò cadere:
In tanto io piu ridea del suo
Ella piu s'arrossia del riso mio.—Am. Atto ii. Sc. ii.

I proceed next to treat of Lyric Poetry, or the Ode; a species of poetical composition which possesses much dignity, and in which many writers have distinguished themselves, in every age. Its peculiar character is, that it is intended to be sung, or accompanied with music. Its designation implies this. 'Ode' is, in Greek, the same with song or hymn; and lyric poetry imports, that the verses are accompanied with a lyre, or musical instrument. This distinction was not, at first, peculiar to any one species of poetry. For, as I observed in the last Lecture, music and poetry were coeval, and were, originally, always joined together. But after their separation took place, after bards had begun to make verse compositions, which were to be recited or read, not to be sung, such poems as were designed to be still joined with music or song, were, by way of distinction, called Odes.

In the ode, therefore, poetry retains its first and most ancient form; that form, under which the original bards poured forth their enthusiastic strains, praised their gods and their heroes, celebrated their victories, and lamented their misfortunes. It is from this circumstance, of the ode's being supposed to retain its original union with music, that we are to deduce the proper idea, and the peculiar qualities of this kind of poetry. It is not distinguished from other kinds, by the subjects on which it is employed; for these may be extremely various. I know no distinction of subject that belongs to it, except that other poems are often employed in the recital of actions, whereas sentiments, of one kind or other, form, almost always, the subject of the ode. But it is chiefly the spirit, the manner of its execution, that marks and characterizes it. Music and song naturally add to the warmth of poetry. They tend to transport, in a higher degree, both the person who sings and the persons who hear. They justify, therefore, a bolder and more passionate strain, than can be supported in simple recitation. On this is formed the peculiar character of the ode. Hence, the enthusiasm that belongs to it, and the liberties it is allowed to take, beyond any other species of poetry. Hence, that neglect of regularity, those digressions, and that disorder, which it is supposed to admit; and which, indeed, most lyric poets have not failed sufficiently to exemplify in their practice.

The effects of music upon the mind are chiefly two; to raise it above its ordinary state, and fill it with high enthusiastic emotions; or to soothe, and melt it into the gentle pleasureable feelings. Hence, the ode may either aspire to the former character of the sublime and noble, or it may descend to the latter, of the pleasant and the gay; and between these there is, also, a middle region, of the mild and temperate emotions, which the ode may often occupy to advantage.

All odes may be comprised under four denominations. First, Sacred odes; hymns addressed to God, or composed on religious subjects. Of this nature are the Psalms of David, which exhibit to us this species of lyric poetry in its highest degree of perfection. Secondly, Heroic odes, which are employed in the praise of heroes, and in the celebration of martial exploits and great actions. Of this kind are all Pindar's odes, and some few of Horace's. These two kinds ought to have sublimity and elevation for their reigning character. Thirdly, Moral and Philosophical odes, where the sentiments are chiefly inspired by virtue, friendship, and humanity. Of this kind, are many of Horace's odes, and several of our best modern lyric productions; and here the ode possesses that middle region, which, as I observed, it sometimes occupies. Fourthly, Festive and Amorous odes, calculated merely for pleasure and amusement. Of this nature, are all Anacreon's; some of Horace's, and a great number of songs and modern productions, that claim to be of the lyric species. The reigning character of these, ought to be elegance, smoothness, and gaiety.

One of the chief difficulties in composing odes, arises from that enthusiasm which is understood to be a characteristic of lyric poetry. A professed ode, even of the moral kind, but more especially if it attempt the sublime, is expected to be enlivened and animated, in an uncommon degree. Full of this idea, the poet, when he begins to write an ode, if he has any real warmth of genius, is apt to deliver himself up to it, without control or restraint; if he has it not, he strains after it, and thinks himself bound to assume the appearance of being all fervour, and all flame. In either case he is in great hazard of becoming extravagant. The licentiousness of writing without order, method, or connexion, has infected the ode more than any other species of poetry. Hence, in the class of heroic odes, we find so few that one can read with pleasure. The poet is out of sight in a moment. He gets up into the clouds; becomes so abrupt in his transitions; so eccentric and irregular in his motions, and of course so obscure, that we essay in vain to follow him, or to partake of his raptures. I do not require, that an ode should be as regular in the structure of its parts, as a didactic, or an epic poem. But still, in every composition, there ought to be a subject; there ought to be parts which make up a whole; there should be a connexion of those parts with one another. The transitions from thought to thought may be light and delicate, such as are prompted by a lively fancy; but still they should be such as preserve the connexion of ideas, and shew the author to be one who thinks, and not one who raves. Whatever authority may be pleaded for the incoherence and disorder of lyric poetry, nothing can be more certain, than that any composition which is so irre-

gular in its method, as to become obscure to the bulk of readers, is so much worse upon that account.*

The extravagant liberty which several of the modern lyric writers assume to themselves in the versification, increases the disorder of this species of poetry. They prolong their periods to such a degree, they wander through so many different measures, and employ such a variety of long and short lines, corresponding in rhyme at so great a distance from each other, that all sense of melody is utterly lost. Whereas lyric composition ought, beyond every other species of poetry, to pay attention to melody and beauty of sound; and the versification of those odes may be justly accounted the best, which renders the harmony of the measure most sensible to every common ear.

Pindar, the great father of lyric poetry, has been the occasion of leading his imitators into some of the defects I have now mentioned. His genius was sublime; his expressions are beautiful and happy; his descriptions picturesque. But finding it a very barren subject to sing the praises of those who had gained the prize in the public games, he is perpetually digressive, and fills up his poems with fables of the gods and heroes, that have little connexion either with his subject, or with one another. The ancients admired him greatly; but as many of the histories of particular families and cities to which he alludes, are now unknown to us, he is so obscure, partly from his subjects, and partly from his rapid, abrupt manner of treating them, that, notwithstanding the beauty of his expression, our pleasure in reading him is much diminished. One would imagine, that many of his modern imitators thought the best way to catch his spirit, was to imitate his disorder and obscurity. In several of the chorusses of Euripides and Sophocles, we have the same kind of lyric poetry as in Pindar, carried on with more clearness and connexion, and at the same time with much sublimity.

* 'La plupart de ceux qui parlent de l'enthousiasme de l'ode, en parlent comme s'ils étoient eux-mêmes dans le trouble qu'ils veulent définir. Ce ne sont que grands mots de fureur divine, de transports de l'âme, de mouvemens, de lumierès, qui mis bout-à-bout dans des phrases pompeuses, ne produisent pourtant aucune idée distincte. Si on les en croit, l'essence de l'enthousiasme est de ne pouvoir-être compris que par les esprits du premier ordre, à la tête desquels ils se supposent, et dont ils excluent tous ceux qui osent ne les pas entendre.—Le beau désordre de l'ode est un effet de l'art; mais il faut prendre garde de donner trop d'étendue à ce terme. On autoriseroit par là tous les écarts imaginables. Un poëte n'auroit plus qu'a exprimer avec force toutes les pensées qui lui viendroient successivement; il se tiendroit dispensé d'en examiner le rapport, et de se faire un plan, dont toutes les parties se prêtassent mutuellement des beautés. Il n'y auroit ni commencement, ni milieu, ni fin, dans son ouvrage; et cependant l'auteur se croiroit d'autant plus sublime, qu'il seroit moins raisonnable. Mais que produiroit une pareille composition dans l'esprit du lecteur? Elle ne laisseroit qu'un étourdissement, causé par la magnificence et l'harmonie des paroles, sans y faire naître que des idées confuses, qui chasseroient l'une ou l'autre, au lieu de concourir ensemble à fixer et à eclairer l'esprit.' ŒUVRES DE M. DE LA MOTTE, tome i. Discours sur l'Ode.

Of all the writers of odes, ancient or modern, there is none, that, in point of correctness, harmony, and happy expression, can vie with Horace. He has descended from the Pindaric rapture to a more moderate degree of elevation; and joins connected thought, and good sense, with the highest beauties of poetry. He does not often aspire beyond that middle region, which I mentioned as belonging to the ode; and those odes, in which he attempts the sublime, are perhaps not always his best.* The peculiar character, in which he excels, is grace and elegance; and in this style of composition, no poet has ever attained to a greater perfection than Horace. No poet supports a moral sentiment with more dignity, touches a gay one more happily, or possesses the art of trifling more agreeably when he chooses to trifle. His language is so fortunate, that with a single word or epithet, he often conveys a whole description to the fancy. Hence he ever has been, and ever will continue to be, a favourite author with all persons of taste.

Among the Latin poets of later ages, there have been many imitators of Horace. One of the most distinguished is Casimir, a Polish poet of the last century, who wrote four books of Odes. In graceful ease of expression, he is far inferior to the Roman. He oftener affects the sublime; and in the attempt, like other lyric writers, frequently becomes harsh and unnatural. But, on several occasions, he discovers a considerable degree of original genius, and poetical fire. Buchanan, in some of his lyric compositions, is very elegant and classical.

Among the French, the odes of Jean Baptiste Rousseau have been much and justly celebrated. They possess great beauty, both of sentiment and expression. They are animated, without being rhapsodical; and are not inferior to any poetical productions in the French language.

In our own language, we have several lyric compositions of considerable merit. Dryden's Ode on St. Cecilia, is well known. Mr. Gray is distinguished in some of his odes, both for tenderness and sublimity; and in Dodsley's Miscellanies, several very beautiful lyric poems are to be found. As to professed Pindaric odes, they are, with a few exceptions, so incoherent, as seldom to be intelligible. Cowley, at all times harsh, is doubly so in his Pindaric compositions. In his Anacreontic Odes he is much happier. They are smooth and elegant; and, indeed, the most agreeable, and the most perfect, in their kind, of all Mr. [illegible] poems.

* There is no ode whatever of Horace's, without great beauties. But though I may be singular in my opinion, I cannot help thinking that in some of those odes which have been much admired for sublimity (such as Ode iv. lib. 4. 'Qualem ministrum fulminis alitem,' &c.) there appears somewhat of a strained and forced effort to be lofty. The genius of this amiable poet shews itself, according to my judgment, to greater advantage, in themes of a more temperate kind.

LECTURE XL

DIDACTIC POETRY—DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

Having treated of pastoral and lyric poetry, I proceed next to Didactic Poetry; under which is included a numerous class of writings. The ultimate end of all poetry, indeed of every composition, should be, to make some useful impression on the mind. This useful impression is most commonly made in poetry, by indirect methods; as by fable, by narration, by representation of characters; but didactic poetry openly professes its intention of conveying knowledge and instruction. It differs, therefore, in the form only, not in the scope and substance, from a philosophical, a moral, or a critical treatise in prose. At the same time, by means of its form, it has several advantages over prose instruction. By the charm of versification and numbers, it renders instruction more agreeable; by the descriptions, episodes, and other embellishments, which it may interweave, it detains and engages the fancy; it fixes also useful circumstances more deeply in the memory. Hence, it is a field, wherein a poet may gain great honour, may display both much genius, and much knowledge and judgment.

It may be executed in different manners. The poet may choose some instructive subject, and he may treat it regularly, and in form; or, without intending a great or regular work, he may only inveigh against particular vices, or make some moral observations on human life and characters, as is commonly done in satires and epistles. All these come under the denomination of didactic poetry.

The highest species of it, is a regular treatise on some philosophical, grave, or useful subject. Of this nature we have several, both ancient and modern, of great merit and character: such as Lucretius's six books De Rerum Natura, Virgil's Georgics, Pope's Essay on Criticism, Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination, Armstrong on Health, Horace's, Vida's, and Boileau's Art of Poetry.

In all such works, as instruction is the professed object, the fundamental merit consists in sound thought, just principles, clear and apt illustrations. The poet must instruct; but he must study, at the same time, to enliven his instructions, by the introduction of such figures, and such circumstances, as may amuse the imagination, may conceal the dryness of his subject, and embellish it with poetical painting. Virgil, in his Georgics, presents us here with a perfect model. He has the art of raising and beautifying the most trivial circumstances in rural life. When he is going to say,

that the labour of the country must begin in spring, he expresses himself thus:

> Vere novo, gelidus canis cum montibus humor
> Liquitur, et Zephyro putris se gleba resolvit;
> Depresso incipiat jam tum mihi Taurus aratro
> Ingemere, et sulco attritus splendescere vomer.*

Instead of telling his husbandman in plain language, that his crops will fail through bad management, his language is,

> Heu magnum alterius frustra spectabis acervum,
> Concussâque famem in sylvis solabere quercu.†

Instead of ordering him to water his grounds, he presents us with a beautiful landscape:

> Ecce supercilio clivosi tramitis undam
> Elicit; illa cadens, raucum per lævia murmur
> Saxa ciet; scatebrisque arentia temperat arva.‡

In all didactic works, method and order is essentially requisite; not so strict and formal as in a prose treatise; yet such as may exhibit clearly to the reader a connected train of instruction. Of the didactic poets, whom I before mentioned, Horace, in his Art of Poetry, is the one most censured for want of method. Indeed, if Horace be deficient in any thing throughout many of his writings, it is in this, of not being sufficiently attentive to juncture and connexion of parts. He writes always with ease and gracefulness; but often in a manner somewhat loose and rambling. There is, however, in that work much good sense and excellent criticism; and if it be considered as intended for the regulation of the Roman drama, which seems to have been the author's chief purpose, it will be found to be a more complete and regular treatise, than under the common notion of its being a system of the whole poetical art.

> While yet the spring is young, while earth unbinds
> Her frozen bosom to the western winds;
> While mountain snow dissolve against the sun,
> And streams yet new from precipices run;
> Ev'n in this early dawning of the year,
> Produce the plough, and yoke the sturdy steer,
> And goad him till he groans beneath his toil,
> Till the bright share is buried in the soil.
>
> On others' crops you may with envy look,
> And shake for food the long abandon'd oak.—DRYDEN.
>
> Behold when burning suns, or Syrius' beams
> Strike fiercely on the field and withering stems,
> Down from the summit of the neighbouring hills,
> O'er the smooth stones he calls the bubbling rills;
> Soon as he clears whate'er their passage stay'd,
> And marks their future current with his spade,
> Before him scattering they prevent his pains,
> And roll with hollow murmurs o'er the plains.—WARTON.

With regard to episodes and embellishments, great liberty is allowed to writers of didactic poetry. We soon tire of a continued series of instructions, especially in a poetical work, where we look for entertainment. The great art of rendering a didactic poem interesting, is to relieve and amuse the reader, by connecting some agreeable episodes with the principal subject. These are always the parts of the work which are best known, and which contribute most to support the reputation of the poet. The principal beauties of Virgil's Georgics lie in digressions of this kind, in which the author has exerted all the force of his genius; such as the prodigies that attended the death of Julius Cæsar, the praises of Italy, the happiness of a country life, the fable of Aristeus, and the moving tale of Orpheus and Eurydice. In like manner, the favourite passages in Lucretius's work, and which alone could render such a dry and abstract subject tolerable in poetry, are the digressions on the evils of superstition, the praise of Epicurus and his philosophy, the description of the plague, and several other incidental illustrations, which are remarkably elegant, and adorned with a sweetness and harmony of versification peculiar to that poet. There is indeed nothing in poetry so entertaining or descriptive, but what a didactic writer of genius may be allowed to introduce in some part of his work; provided always, that such episodes arise naturally from the main subject; that they be not disproportioned in length to it; and that the author know how to descend with propriety to the plain, as well as how to rise to the bold and figured style.

Much art may be shewn by a didactic poet; in connecting his episodes happily with his subject. Virgil is also distinguished for his address in this point. After seeming to have left his husbandmen, he again returns to them very naturally, by laying hold of some rural circumstance, to terminate his digression. Thus, having spoken of the battle of Pharsalia, he subjoins immediately, with much art:

> Scilicet et tempus veniet, cum finibus illis,
> Agricola, incurvo terram molitus aratro,
> Exesa inveniet scabrâ rubigine pila:
> Aut gravibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanes,
> Grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulchris.

In English, Dr. Akenside has attempted the most rich and poetical form of didactic writing, in his Pleasures of the Imagination; and though, in the execution of the whole, he is not equal he has, in several parts, succeeded happily, and displayed much

> Then, after length of time, the lab'ring swains
> Who turn the turf of these unhappy plains,
> Shall rusty arms from the plough'd furrows take,
> And over empty helmets pass the rake;
> Amused at antique titles on the stones,
> And mighty relics of gigantic bones.---DRYDEN.

genius. Dr. Armstrong, in his Art of Preserving Health, has not aimed at so high a strain as the other; but he is more equal, and maintains throughout a chaste and correct elegance.

Satires and epistles naturally run into a more familiar style, than solemn philosophical poetry. As the manners and characters, which occur in ordinary life, are their subject, they require being treated with somewhat of the ease and freedom of conversation; and hence it is commonly the 'musa pedestris,' which reigns in such compositions.

Satire, in its first state among the Romans, had a form different from what it afterward assumed. Its origin is obscure, and has given occasion to altercation among critics. It seems to have been at first a relic of the ancient comedy, written partly in prose, partly in verse, and abounding with scurrility. Ennius and Lucilius corrected its grossness; and, at last, Horace brought it into that form, which now gives the denomination to satirical writing. Reformation of manners is the end which it professes to have in view; and in order to this end, it assumes the liberty of boldly censuring vice and vicious characters. It has been carried on in three different manners, by the three great ancient satirists, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius. Horace's style has not much elevation. He entitles his satires, 'Sermones,' and seems not to have intended rising much higher than prose put into numbers. His manner is easy and graceful. They are rather the follies and weaknesses of mankind, than their enormous vices, which he chooses for the object of his satire. He reproves with a smiling aspect; and while he moralizes like a sound philosopher, discovers, at the same time, the politeness of a courtier. Juvenal is much more serious and declamatory. He has more strength and fire, and more elevation of style, than Horace; but is greatly inferior to him in gracefulness and ease. His satire is more zealous, more sharp and pointed, as being generally directed against more flagitious characters. As Scaliger says of him, 'ardet, instat, jugulat,' whereas Horace's character is 'admissus circum præcordia ludit.' Persius has a greater resemblance of the force and fire of Juvenal, than of the politeness of Horace. He is distinguished for sentiments of noble and sublime morality. He is a nervous and lively writer; but withal, often harsh and obscure.

Poetical epistles, when employed on moral or critical subjects, [illegible] rise into a higher strain of poetry than satires. In the [illegible] an epistle, indeed, many other subjects may be handled, an[illegible]er love poetry, or elegiac, may be carried on; as in Ovid's Epistolæ Herodium, and his Epistolæ de Ponto. Such works as these are designed to be merely sentimental; and as their merit consists in being proper expressions of the passion or sentiment which forms the subject, they may assume any tone of poetry that

is suited to it. But didactic epistles, of which I now speak, seldom admit of much elevation. They are commonly intended as observations on authors, or on life and characters; in delivering which, the poet does not purpose to compose a formal treatise, or to confine himself strictly to regular method, but gives scope to his genius on some particular theme, which, at the time, has prompted him to write. In all didactic poetry of this kind, it is an important rule, 'quicquid precipes, esto brevis.' Much of the grace, both of satirical and epistolary writing, consists in a spirited conciseness. This gives to such composition an edge and a liveliness, which strike the fancy and keep attention awake. Much of their merit depends also on just and happy representations of characters. As they are not supported by those high beauties of descriptive and poetical language which adorn other compositions, we expect, in return, to be entertained with lively paintings of men and manners, which are always pleasing; and in these, a certain sprightliness and turn of wit finds its proper place. The higher species of poetry seldom admit it; but here it is seasonable and beautiful.

In all these respects, Mr. Pope's Ethical Epistles deserve to be mentioned with signal honour, as a model, next to perfect, of this kind of poetry. Here, perhaps, the strength of his genius appeared. In the more sublime parts of poetry he is not so distinguished. In the enthusiasm, the fire, the force and copiousness of poetic genius, Dryden, though a much less correct writer, appears to have been superior to him. One can scarce think that he was capable of epic or tragic poetry; but, within a certain limited region, he has been outdone by no poet. His translation of the Iliad will remain a lasting monument to his honour, as the most elegant and highly finished translation that, perhaps, ever was given of any poetical work. That he was not incapable of tender poetry, appears from the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, and from the Verses to the Memory of an unfortunate Lady, which are almost his only sentimental productions; and which indeed are excellent in their kind. But the qualities for which he is chiefly distinguished are, judgment, and wit, with a concise and happy expression, and a melodious versification. Few poets ever had more wit, and at the same time more judgment, to direct the proper employment of that wit. This renders his Rape of the Lock the greatest master-piece that perhaps was ever composed, in the gay and sprightly style; and in his serious works, such as his Essay on Man, and his Ethic Epistles, his wit just discovers itself as much, as to give a proper seasoning to grave reflections. His imitations of Horace are so peculiarly happy, that one is at a loss, whether most to admire the original, or the copy; and they are among the few imitations extant, that have all the grace and ease of an original. His paintings of characters are natural and lively in a high degree; and

never was any writer so happy in that concise spirited style, which gives animation to satires and epistles. We are never so sensible of the good effects of rhyme in English verse, as in reading these parts of his works. We see it adding to the style, an elevation which otherwise it could not have possessed; while at the same time he manages it so artfully, that it never appears in the least to encumber him; but on the contrary, serves to increase the liveliness of his manner. He tells us himself, that he could express moral observations more concisely, and therefore more forcibly, in rhyme, than he could do in prose.

Among moral and didactic poets, Dr. Young is of too great eminence to be passed over without notice. In all his works, the marks of strong genius appear. His universal passion, possesses the full merit of that animated conciseness of style, and lively description of characters, which I mentioned as particularly requisite in satirical and didactic compositions. Though his wit may often be thought too sparkling, and his sentences too pointed, yet the vivacity of his fancy is so great, as to entertain every reader. In his Night Thoughts, there is much energy of expression; in the three first, there are several pathetic passages; and scattered through them all, happy images and allusions, as well as pious reflections, occur. But the sentiments are frequently over-strained, and turgid; and the style is too harsh and obscure to be pleasing. Among French authors, Boileau has undoubtedly much merit in didactic poetry. Their later critics are unwilling to allow him any great share of original genius, or poetic fire.* But his Art of Poetry, his Satires and Epistles, must ever be esteemed eminent, not only for solid and judicious thought, but for correct and elegant poetical expression, and fortunate imitation of the ancients.

From didactic, I proceed next to treat of Descriptive Poetry, where the highest exertions of genius may be displayed. By descriptive poetry, I do not mean any one particular species or form of composition. There are few compositions of any length, that can be called purely descriptive, or wherein the poet proposes to himself no other object but merely to describe, without employing narration, action, or moral sentiment, as the groundwork of his piece. Description is generally introduced as an embellishment, rather than made the subject of a regular work. But though it seldom form a separate species of writing, yet into every species of poetical composition, pastoral, lyric, didactic, epic, and dramatic, it both enters and possesses in each of them a very considerable place; so that in treating of poetry, it demands no small attention.

Description is the great test of a poet's imagination, and always distinguishes an original from a second-rate genius. To a writer of the inferior class, nature, when at any time he attempts

* Vid. Poetique Françoise de Marmontel.

to describe it, appears exhausted by those who have gone before him in the same track.* He sees nothing new, or peculiar, in the object which he would paint; his conceptions of it are loose and vague; and his expressions, of course, feeble and general. He gives us words rather than ideas; we meet with the language indeed of poetical description, but we apprehend the object described very indistinctly. Whereas a true poet makes us imagine that we see it before our eyes; he catches the distinguishing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in such a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a strong imagination, which first receives a lively impression of the object; and then, by employing a proper selection of circumstances in describing it, transmits that impression in its full force to the imagination of others.

In this selection of circumstances, lies the great art of picturesque description. In the first place, they ought not to be vulgar and common ones, such as are apt to pass by without remark; but, as much as possible, new and original, which may catch the fancy, and draw attention. In the next place, they ought to be such as particularize the object described, and mark it strongly. No description that rests in generals can be good. For we can conceive nothing clearly in the abstract; all distinct ideas are formed upon particulars. In the third place, all the circumstances employed ought to be uniform, and of a piece; that is, when describing a great object, every circumstance brought into view should tend to aggrandize; or, when describing a gay and pleasant one, should tend to beautify, that, by this means, the impression may rest upon the imagination, complete and entire; and lastly, the circumstances in description should be expressed with conciseness, and with simplicity; for when either too much exaggerated, or too long dwelt upon and extended, they never fail to enfeeble the impression that is designed to be made. Brevity, almost always, contributes to vivacity. These general rules will be best understood by illustrations founded on particular instances.

Of all professed descriptive compositions, the largest and fullest that I am acquainted with in any language, is Mr. Thomson's Seasons; a work which possesses very uncommon merit. The style, in the midst of much splendour and strength, is sometimes harsh, and may be censured as deficient in ease and distinctness. But notwithstanding this defect, Thomson is a strong and beautiful describer: for he had a feeling heart, and a warm imagination. He had studied and copied nature with care. Enamoured of her beauties, he not only described them properly, but felt their impression with strong sensibility. The impression which he felt, he transmits to his readers; and no person of taste can peruse any one of his Seasons, without having the ideas and feelings which

belong to that season, recalled, and rendered present to his mind. Several instances of most beautiful description might be given from him; such as the shower in Spring, the morning in Summer, and the man perishing in snow in Winter. But at present, I shall produce a passage of another kind, to shew the power of a single well-chosen circumstance, to heighten a description. In his Summer, relating the effects of heat in the torrid zone, he is led to take notice of the pestilence that destroyed the English fleet, at Carthagena, under Admiral Vernon; when he has the following lines:

——— you, gallant Vernon, saw
The miserable scene; you pitying saw
To infant weakness sunk the warrior's arms;
Saw the deep racking pang; the ghastly form;
The lip pale quiv'ring; and the beamless eye
No more with ardour bright; you heard the groans
Of agonizing ships from shore to shore;
Heard nightly plunged, amid the sullen waves,
The frequent corse.——— L. 1050.

All the circumstances here are properly chosen, for setting this dismal scene in a strong light before our eyes. But what is most striking in the picture, is the last image. We are conducted through all the scenes of distress, till we come to the mortality prevailing in the fleet, which a vulgar poet would have described by exaggerated expressions, concerning the multiplied trophies and victories of death. But, how much more is the imagination impressed by this single circumstance, of dead bodies, thrown overboard every night; of the constant sound of their falling into the waters; and of the admiral listening to this melancholy sound, so often striking his ear?

Heard nightly plunged, amid the sullen waves,
The frequent corse.*

* The eulogium which Dr. Johnson, in his Lives of the Poets, gives of Thomson, is high, and, in my opinion, very just: 'As a writer, he is entitled to one praise of the highest kind; his mode of thinking, and of expressing his thoughts, is original. His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton, or of any other poet, than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction, are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation. He thinks in a peculiar train, and he thinks always as a man of genius. He looks round on nature and life, with the eye which nature bestows only on a poet; the eye that distinguishes in every thing presented to its view, whatever there is on which imagination can delight to be detained; and with a mind that at once comprehends the vast and attends to the minute. The reader of the Seasons wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shews him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses. His descriptions of extended scenes, and general effects, bring before us the whole magnificence of nature, whether pleasing or dreadful. The gaiety of spring, the splendour of summer, the tranquillity of autumn, and the horror of winter, take, in their turn, possession of the mind. The poet leads us through the appearances of things, as they are successively varied by the vicissitudes of the year, and imparts to us so much of his

Mr Parnell's tale of the Hermit is conspicuous, throughout the whole of it, for beautiful descriptive narration. The manner of the hermit's setting forth to visit the world; his meeting with a companion, and the houses, in which they are successively entertained, of the vain man, the covetous man, and the good man, are pieces of very fine painting, touched with a light and delicate pencil, overcharged with no superfluous colouring, and conveying to us a lively idea of the objects. But of all the English poems in the descriptive style, the richest and most remarkable are Milton's Allegro and Penseroso. The collection of gay images on the one hand, and of melancholy ones on the other, exhibited in these two small but inimitably fine poems, are as exquisite as can be conceived. They are, indeed, the storehouse whence many succeeding poets have enriched their descriptions of similar subjects; and they alone are sufficient for illustrating the observations, which I made concerning the proper selection of circumstances in descriptive writing. Take, for instance, the following passage from the Penseroso:

——— I walk unseen
On the dry, smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft as if her head she bow'd
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide water'd shore,
Swinging slow with solemn roar:
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm;
Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may outwatch the bear
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
Th' immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her mansion in his fleshly nook;
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under-ground.

own enthusiasm, that our thoughts expand with his imagery, and kindle with his sentiments.' The censure which the same eminent critic passes upon Thomson's diction, is no less just and well-founded, that 'it is too exuberant, and may sometimes be charged with filling the ear more than the mind.'

Here, there are no unmeaning general expressions; all is particular; all is picturesque; nothing forced or exaggerated; but a simple style, and a collection of strong expressive images, which are all of one class, and recall a number of similar ideas of the melancholy kind: particularly the walk by moonlight; the sound of the curfew-bell heard distant; the dying embers in the chamber; the bellman's call; and the lamp seen at midnight in the high lonely tower. We may observe too, the conciseness of the poet's manner. He does not rest long on one circumstance, or employ a great many words to describe it; which always makes the impression faint and languid; but placing it in one strong point of view, full and clear before the reader, he there leaves it.

'From his shield and his helmet,' says Homer, describing one of his heroes in battle, 'From his shield and his helmet, there sparkled an incessant blaze; like the autumnal star, when it appears in its brightness from the waters of the ocean.' This is short and lively: but when it comes into Mr. Pope's hand, it evaporates in three pompous lines, each of which repeats the same image in different words;

> High on his helm celestial lightnings play,
> His beamy shield emits a living ray;
> Th' unwearied blaze incessant streams supplies,
> Like the red star that fires th' autumnal skies.

It is to be observed, in general, that, in describing solemn or great objects, the concise manner is, almost always, proper. Descriptions of gay and smiling scenes can bear to be more amplified and prolonged; as strength is not the predominant quality expected in these. But where a sublime or a pathetic impression is intended to be made, energy is above all things required. The imagination ought then to be seized at once; and it is far more deeply impressed by one strong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteness of laboured illustration.—'His face was without form, and dark,' says Ossian, describing a ghost; 'the stars dim twinkling through his form; thrice he sighed over the hero; and thrice the winds of the night roared around.'

It deserves attention too, that in describing inanimate natural objects, the poet, in order to enliven his description, ought always to mix living beings with them. The scenes of dead and still life are apt to pall upon us, if the poet do not suggest sentiments, and introduce life and action into his description. This is well known to every painter who is a master of his art. Seldom has any beautiful landscape been drawn, without some human being represented on the canvas, as beholding it, or on some account concerned in it.

> Hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori,
> Hic nemus, hic ipso tecum consumerer ævo.*

The touching part of these fine lines of Virgil's is the last, which sets before us the interest of two lovers in this rural scene. A long description of the '*fontes*,' the '*nemus*,' and the '*prata*,' in the most poetical modern manner, would have been insipid without this stroke, which, in a few words, brings home to the heart all the beauties of the place: 'hic ipso tecum consumerer ævo.' It is a great beauty in Milton's Allegro, that it is all alive and full of persons.

Every thing, as I before said, in description, should be as marked and particular as possible, in order to imprint on the mind a distinct and complete image. A hill, a river, or a lake, rises up more conspicuous to the fancy, when some particular lake, or river, or hill, is specified, than when the terms are left general. Most of the ancient writers have been sensible of the advantage which this gives to description. Thus, in that beautiful pastoral composition, the Song of Solomon, the images are commonly particularized by the objects to which they allude. 'It is the rose of Sharon; the lily of the valleys; the flock which feeds on mount Gilead; the stream which comes from mount Lebanon. Come with me, from Lebanon, my spouse; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the mountains of the Leopards.' Ch. iv. 8. So Horace:

> Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinem
> Vates? quid orat de patera novum
> Fundens liquorem? non opimas
> Sardinæ segetes feracis;
> Non æstuosæ grata Calabriæ
> Armenta; non aurum aut ebur Indicum,
> Non rura, quæ Liris quietâ
> Mordet aquâ, taciturnus amnis.†---Lib. i. Ode 31.

Both Homer and Virgil are remarkable for the talent of poetical description. In Virgil's second Æneid, where he describes

* Here cooling fountains roll through flowery meads;
Here woods, Lycoris, lift their verdant heads;
Here could I wear my careless life away,
And in thy arms insensibly decay.---Virg. Ecl. x. Warton.

† When at Apollo's hallow'd shrine
The poet hails the pow'r divine,
And here his first libation pours,
What is the blessing he implores?
He nor desires the swelling grain,
That yellow o'er Sardinia's plain,
Nor the fair herds that lowing feed
On warm Calabria's flowery mead;
Nor ivory of spotless shine;
Nor gold forth flaming from the mine
Nor the rich fields that Liris laves,
And eats away with silent waves.---Francis.

the burning and sacking of Troy, the particulars are so well selected and presented, that the reader finds himself in the midst of that scene of horror. The death of Priam, especially, may be singled out as a master-piece of description. All the circumstances of the aged monarch arraying himself in armour, when he finds the enemy making themselves masters of the city; his meeting with his family, who are taking shelter at an altar in the court of the palace, and their placing him in the midst of them; his indignation when he beholds Pyrrhus slaughtering one of his sons; the feeble dart which he throws; with Pyrrhus's brutal behaviour, and his manner of putting the old man to death, are painted in the most affecting manner, and with a masterly hand. All Homer's battles, and Milton's account, both of Paradise and of the Infernal Regions, furnish many beautiful instances of poetical description. Ossian, too, paints in strong and lively colours, though he employs few circumstances; and his chief excellency lies in painting to the heart. One of his fullest descriptions is, the following of the ruins of Balclutha: 'I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded within the halls; and the voice of the people is now heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its place by the fall of the walls; the thistle shook there its lonely head; the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out at the window; the rank grass waved round his head. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina. Silence is in the house of her fathers.' Shakspeare cannot be omitted on this occasion, as singularly eminent for painting with the pencil of nature. Though it be in manners and characters that his chief excellency lies, yet his scenery also is often exquisite, and happily described by a single stroke, as in that fine line of the 'Merchant of Venice,' which conveys to the fancy as natural and beautiful an image as can possibly be exhibited in so few words:

> How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
> Here will we sit, &c.

Much of the beauty of descriptive poetry depends upon a right choice of epithets. Many poets, it must be confessed, are too careless in this particular. Epithets are frequently brought in merely to complete the verse, or make the rhyme answer; and hence they are so unmeaning and redundant; expletive words only, which, in place of adding any thing to the description, clog and enervate it. Virgil's 'Liquidi fontes,' and Horace's 'Prata canis albicant pruinis,' must, I am afraid, be assigned to this class; for, to denote by an epithet that water is liquid, or that snow is white, is no better than mere tautology. Every epithet should either add a new idea to the word which it qualifies, or at least serve to raise and heighten its known signification. So in Milton,

——— Who shall attempt with wandering feet
The dark, unbottom'd, infinite abyss,
And through the palpable obscure, find out
His uncouth way? or spread his airy flight,
Upborne with indefatigable wings,
Over the vast abrupt? B. ii.

The epithets employed here plainly add strength to the description, and assist the fancy in conceiving it;—the wandering feet—the unbottomed abyss—the palpable obscure—the uncouth way—the indefatigable wing—serve to render the images more complete and distinct. But there are many general epithets, which, though they appear to raise the signification of the word to which they are joined, yet leave it so undetermined, and are now become so trite and beaten in poetical language, as to be perfectly insipid. Of this kind are 'barbarous discord—hateful envy—mighty chiefs—bloody war—gloomy shades—direful scenes,' and a thousand more of the same kind which we meet with occasionally in good poets; but with which poets of inferior genius abound every where, as the great props of their affected sublimity. They give a sort of swell to the language, and raise it above the tone of prose; but they serve not in the least to illustrate the object described; on the contrary, they load the style with a languid verbosity.

Sometimes it is in the power of a poet of genius, by one well-chosen epithet, to accomplish a description, and by means of a single word, to paint a whole scene to the fancy. We may remark this effect of an epithet in the following fine lines of Milton's Lycidas:

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.

Among these wild scenes, 'Deva's wizard stream' is admirably imaged; by this one word, presenting to the fancy all the romantic ideas, of a river floating through a desolate country, with banks haunted by wizards and enchanters. Akin to this is an epithet which Horace gives to the river Hydaspes. A good man, says he, stands in need of no arms:

Sive per Syrtes iter æstuosas,
Sive facturus per inhospitalem
Caucasum; vel quæ loca fabulosus
Lambit Hydaspes.*

This epithet 'fabulosus,' one of the commentators on Horace has changed into 'sabulosus,' or sandy; substituting, by a strange

* Whether through Lybia's burning sands,
Our journey leads, or Scythia's lands,
Amidst th' inhospitable waste of snows,
Or where the fabulous Hydaspes flows.---FRANCIS.

want of taste, the common and trivial epithet of the sandy river, in place of that beautiful picture which the poet gives us, by calling Hydaspes the romantic river, or the scene of adventures and poetic tales.

Virgil has employed an epithet with great beauty and propriety, when accounting for Dædalus not having engraved the fortune of his son Icarus:

> Bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro,
> Bis patriæ cecidêre manus.* Æn. vi.

These instances, and observations, may give some just idea of true poetical description. We have reason always to distrust an author's descriptive talents, when we find him laborious and turgid, amassing common-place epithets and general expressions, to work up a high conception of some object, of which, after all, we can form but an indistinct idea. The best describers are simple and concise. They set before us such features of an object, as, on the first view, strike and warm the fancy: they give us ideas which a statuary or a painter could lay hold of, and work after them; which is one of the strongest and most decisive trials of the real merit of description.

LECTURE XLI.

THE POETRY OF THE HEBREWS.

Among the various kinds of poetry, which we are, at present, employed in examining, the ancient Hebrew poetry, or that of the Scriptures, justly deserves a place. Viewing these sacred books in no higher light, than as they present to us the most ancient monuments of poetry extant at this day in the world, they afford a curious object of criticism. They display the taste of a remote age and country. They exhibit a species of composition, very different from any other with which we are acquainted, and, at the same time, beautiful. Considered as inspired writings, they give rise to discussions of another kind. But it is our business, at present, to consider them not in a theological, but in a critical view:

> * Here hapless Icarus had found his part,
> Had not the father's grief restrain'd his art;
> He twice essay'd to cast his son in gold,
> Twice from his hand he dropp'd the forming mould.—Dryden.

In this translation the thought is justly given; but the beauty of the expression 'patriæ manus,' which in the original conveys the thought with so much tenderness, is lost.

and it must needs give pleasure, if we shall find the beauty and dignity of the composition adequate to the weight and importance of the matter. Dr. Lowth's learned treatise, 'De Sacrâ Poësi Hebræorum,' ought to be perused by all who desire to become thoroughly acquainted with this subject. It is a work exceedingly valuable, both for the elegance of its composition, and for the justness of the criticism which it contains. In this Lecture, as I cannot illustrate the subject with more benefit to the reader, than by following the tract of that ingenious author, I shall make much use of his observations.

I need not spend many words in shewing, that among the books of the Old Testament there is such an apparent diversity in style, as sufficiently discovers, which of them are to be considered as poetical, and which as prose compositions. While the historical books, and legislative writings of Moses, are evidently prosaic in the composition, the Book of Job, the Psalms of David, the Song of Solomon, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, a great part of the prophetical writings, and several passages scattered occasionally through the historical books, carry the most plain and distinguishing marks of poetical writing.

There is not the least reason for doubting, that originally these were written in verse, or some kind of measured numbers; though, as the ancient pronunciation of the Hebrew language is now lost, we are not able to ascertain the nature of the Hebrew verse, or at most can ascertain it but imperfectly. Concerning this point there have been great controversies among learned men, which it is unnecessary to our present purpose to discuss. Taking the Old Testament in our own translation, which is extremely literal, we find plain marks of many parts of the original being written in a measured style; and the 'disjecti membra poetæ' often shew themselves. Let any person read the historical introduction to the Book of Job, contained in the first and second chapters, and then go on to Job's speech in the beginning of the third chapter, and he cannot avoid being sensible, that he passes all at once from the region of prose to that of poetry. Not only the poetical sentiments, and the figured style, warn him of the change; but the cadence of the sentence, and the arrangement of the words, are sensibly altered; the change is as great as when he passes from reading Cæsar's Commentaries, to read Virgil's Æneid. This is sufficient to shew that the sacred Scriptures contain, what must be called, poetry in the strictest sense of that word; and I shall afterward shew, that they contain instances of most of the different forms of poetical writing. It may be proper to remark, in passing, that hence arises a most invincible argument in honour of poetry. No person can imagine that to be a frivolous and contemptible art, which has been employed by writers under divine inspiration, and

has been chosen as a proper channel for conveying to the world the knowledge of divine truth.

From the earliest times, music and poetry were cultivated among the Hebrews. In the days of the Judges, mention is made of the schools or colleges of the prophets; where one part of the employment of the persons trained in such schools was, to sing the praises of God, accompanied with various instruments. In the First Book of Samuel (chap. x. 7.) we find, on a public occasion, a company of these prophets coming down from the hill where their school was, 'prophesying,' it is said, 'with the psaltery, tabret, and harp, before them.' But in the days of King David, music and poetry were carried to their greatest height. For the service of the tabernacle, he appointed four thousand Levites, divided into twenty-four courses, and marshalled under several leaders, whose sole business it was to sing hymns, and to perform the instrumental music in the public worship. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, were the chief directors of the music; and, from the titles of some Psalms, it would appear that they were also eminent composers of hymns or sacred poems. In chapter xxv. of the First Book of Chronicles, an account is given of David's institutions, relating to the sacred music and poetry; which were certainly more costly, more splendid and magnificent, than ever obtained in the public service of any other nation.

The general construction of the Hebrew poetry is of a singular nature, and peculiar to itself. It consists in dividing every period, into correspondent, for the most part into equal members, which answer to one another, both in sense and sound. In the first member of the period a sentiment is expressed; and in the second member, the same sentiment is amplified, or is repeated in different terms, or sometimes contrasted with its opposite; but in such a manner, that the same structure and nearly the same number of words is preserved. This is the general strain of all the Hebrew poetry. Instances of it occur every where on opening the Old Testament. Thus, in Psalm xcvi. 'Sing unto the Lord a new song—Sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, and bless his name—shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen—his wonders among all the people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised—He is to be feared above all the gods. Honour and majesty are before him—Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.' It is owing, in a great measure, to this form of composition that our version, though in prose, retains so much of a poetical cast. For the version being strictly word for word after the original, the form and order of the original sentence are preserved; which by this artificial structure, this regular alternation and correspondence of parts, makes the ear sensible of a departure from the common style and tone of prose.

The origin of this form of poetical composition among the Hebrews, is clearly to be deduced from the manner in which their sacred hymns were wont to be sung. They were accompanied with music, and they were performed by choirs or bands of singers and musicians, who answered alternately to each other. When, for instance, one band began the hymn thus: 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice;' the chorus, or semi-chorus, took up the corresponding versicle, 'Let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.'——'Clouds and darkness are round about him,' sung the one; the other replied, 'Judgment and righteousness are the habitation of his throne.' And in this manner their poetry, when set to music, naturally divided itself into a succession of strophes and antistrophes correspondent to each other; whence it is probable, the antiphon or responsory, in the public religious service of so many Christian churches, derived its origin.

We are expressly told, in the Book of Ezra, that the Levites sung in this manner: 'Alternatim,' or by course (Ezra, iii. 11.); and some of David's Psalms bear plain marks of their being composed in order to be thus performed. The 24th Psalm, in particular, which is thought to have been composed on the great and solemn occasion of the ark of the covenant being brought back to mount Zion, must have had a noble effect when performed after this manner, as Dr. Lowth has illustrated it. The whole people are supposed to be attending the procession. The Levites and singers, divided into their several courses, and accompanied with all their musical instruments, led the way. After the introduction to the Psalm, in the two first verses, when the procession begins to ascend the sacred mount, the question is put, as by a semi-chorus, 'Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?' The response is made by the full chorus with the greatest dignity: 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.' As the procession approaches to the doors of the tabernacle, the chorus, with all their instruments, join in this exclamation: 'Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.' Here the semi-chorus plainly breaks in, as with a lower voice, 'Who is this King of Glory?' and at the moment when the ark is introduced into the tabernacle, the response is made by the burst of the whole chorus: 'The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle.' I take notice of this instance the rather, as it serves to shew how much of the grace and magnificence of the sacred poems, as indeed of all poems, depends upon our knowing the particular occasions for which they were composed, and the particular circumstances to which they were adapted; and how much of this beauty must now be lost to us, through our imperfect ac-

quaintance with many particulars of the Hebrew history, and Hebrew rites.

The method of composition which has been explained, by correspondent versicles being universally introduced into the hymns or musical poetry of the Jews, easily spread itself through their other poetical writings, which were not designed to be sung in alternate portions, and which therefore did not so much require this mode of composition. But the mode became familiar to their ears, and carried with it a certain solemn majesty of style, particularly suited to sacred subjects. Hence, throughout the prophetical writings, we find it prevailing as much as in the Psalms of David: as, for instance, in the prophet Isaiah (chap. xl. l.): 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee: For, lo; darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. But the Lord shall rise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.' This form of writing is one of the great characteristics of the ancient Hebrew poetry; very different from, and even opposite to, the style of the Greek and Roman poets.

Independently of this peculiar mode of construction, the sacred poetry is distinguished by the highest beauties of strong, concise, bold, and figurative expression.

Conciseness and strength are two of its most remarkable characters. One might indeed at first imagine, that the practice of the Hebrew poets, of always amplifying the same thought, by repetition or contrast, might tend to enfeeble their style. But they conduct themselves so as not to produce this effect. Their sentences are always short. Few superfluous words are used. The same thought is never dwelt upon long. To their conciseness and sobriety of expression, their poetry is indebted for much of its sublimity; and all writers who attempt the sublime, might profit much, by imitating, in this respect, the style of the Old Testament. For, as I have formerly had occasion to shew, nothing is so great an enemy to the sublime, as prolixity or diffuseness. The mind is never so much affected by any great idea that is presented to it, as when it is struck all at once: by attempting to prolong the impression, we at the same time weaken it. Most of the ancient original poets of all nations are simple and concise. The superfluities and excrescences of style were the result of imitation in after-times; when composition passed into inferior hands, and flowed from art and study, more than from native genius.

No writings whatever abound so much with the most bold and animated figures, as the sacred books. It is proper to dwell a little upon this article; as, through our early familiarity with these books, a familiarity too often with the sound of the words, rather

than with their sense and meaning, beauties of style escape us in the Scripture, which, in any other book, would draw particular attention. Metaphors, comparisons, allegories, and personifications, are there particularly frequent. In order to do justice to these, it is necessary that we transport ourselves as much as we can into the land of Judea; and place before our eyes that scenery, and those objects, with which the Hebrew writers were conversant. Some attention of this kind is requisite, in order to relish the writings of any poet of a foreign country, and a different age. For the imagery of every good poet is copied from nature and real life; if it were not so, it could not be lively; and therefore, in order to enter into the propriety of his images, we must endeavour to place ourselves in his situation. Now we shall find, that the metaphors and comparisons of the Hebrew poets present to us a very beautiful view of the natural objects of their own country, and of the arts and employments of their common life.

Natural objects are in some measure common to them with poets of all ages and countries. Light and darkness, trees and flowers, the forest and the cultivated field, suggest to them many beautiful figures. But, in order to relish their figures of this kind, we must take notice, that several of them arise from the particular circumstances of the land of Judea. During the summer months, little or no rain falls throughout all that region. While the heats continued, the country was intolerably parched; want of water was a great distress; and a plentiful shower falling, or a rivulet breaking forth, altered the whole face of nature, and introduced much higher ideas of refreshment and pleasure, than the like causes can suggest to us. Hence, to represent distress, such frequent allusions among them, 'to a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;' and hence, to describe a change from distress to prosperity, their metaphors are founded on the falling of showers, and the bursting out of springs in the desert. Thus in Isaiah, 'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert; and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of water; in the habitation of dragons there shall be grass, with rushes and reeds.' Chap. xxxv. 1. 6, 7. Images of this nature are very familiar to Isaiah, and occur in many parts of his book.

Again, as Judea was a hilly country, it was, during the rainy months, exposed to frequent inundations by the rushing of torrents, which came down suddenly from the mountains, and carried every thing before them; and Jordan, their only great river, annually overflowed its banks. Hence the frequent allusions to 'the noise, and to the rushings of many waters;' and hence great calamities so often compared to the overflowing torrent, which,

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in such a country, must have been images particularly striking: 'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.' Psalm xlii. 7.

The two most remarkable mountains of the country, were Lebanon and Carmel: the former noted for its height, and the woods of lofty cedars that covered it; the latter, for its beauty and fertility, the richness of its vines and olives. Hence, with the greatest propriety, Lebanon is employed as an image of whatever is great, strong, or magnificent: Carmel of what is smiling and beautiful. 'The glory of Lebanon,' says Isaiah, 'shall be given to it, and the excellency of Carmel.' (xxxv. 2.) Lebanon is often put metaphorically for the whole state or people of Israel, for the temple, for the king of Assyria; Carmel, for the blessings of peace and prosperity. 'His countenance is as Lebanon,' says Solomon, speaking of the dignity of man's appearance; but when he describes female beauty, 'Thine head is like mount Carmel.' Song, v. 15. and vii. 5.

It is farther to be remarked under this head, that in the images of the awful and terrible kind, with which the sacred poets abound, they plainly draw their descriptions from that violence of the elements, and those concussions of nature, with which their climate rendered them acquainted. Earthquakes were not unfrequent; and the tempests of hail, thunder, and lightning, in Judea and Arabia, accompanied with whirlwinds and darkness, far exceed any thing of that sort which happens in more temperate regions. Isaiah describes, with great majesty, the earth 'reeling to and fro like a drunkard, and removed like a cottage.' (xxiv. 20.) And in those circumstances of terror, with which an appearance of the Almighty is described in the 18th Psalm, when his 'pavilion round about him was darkness; when hailstones and coals of fire were his voice; and when, at his rebuke, the channels of the waters are said to be seen, and the foundations of the hills discovered;' though there may be some reference, as Dr. Lowth thinks, to the history of God's descent upon mount Sinai, yet it seems more probable, that the figures were taken directly from those commotions of nature with which the author was acquainted, and which suggested stronger and nobler images than what now occur to us.

Besides the natural objects of their own country, we find the rites of their religion, and the arts and employments of their common life, frequently employed as grounds of imagery among the Hebrews. They were a people chiefly occupied with agriculture and pasturage. These were arts held in high honour among them; not disdained by their patriarchs, kings, and prophets. Little addicted to commerce, separated from the rest of the world by their laws and their religion; they were, during the better days of their state, strangers in a great measure to the refinements of luxury.

Hence flowed, of course, the many allusions to pastoral life, to the 'green pastures and the still waters,' and to the care and watchfulness of a shepherd over his stock, which carry to this day so much beauty and tenderness in them, in the 23d Psalm, and in many other passages of the poetical writings of Scripture. Hence, all the images founded upon rural employments, upon the wine-press, the thrashing-floor, the stubble, and the chaff. To disrelish all such images, is the effect of false delicacy. Homer is at least as frequent, and much more minute and particular in his similes, founded on what we now call low life; but, in his management of them, far inferior to the sacred writers, who generally mix with their comparisons of this kind somewhat of dignity and grandeur to ennoble them. What inexpressible grandeur does the following rural image in Isaiah, for instance, receive from the intervention of the Deity: 'The nations shall rush like the rushings of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and they shall fly far off: and they shall be chased as the chaff of the mountain before the wind, and like the down of the thistle before the whirlwind.'

Figurative allusions too, we frequently find, to the rites and ceremonies of their religion; to the legal distinctions of things clean and unclean; to the mode of their temple-service; to the dress of their priests, and to the most noted incidents recorded in their sacred history; as, to the destruction of Sodom, the descent of God upon mount Sinai, and the miraculous passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea. The religion of the Hebrews included the whole of their laws, and civil constitution. It was full of splendid external rites, that occupied their senses; it was connected with every part of their national history and establishment; and hence, all ideas founded on religion, possessed in this nation a dignity and importance peculiar to themselves, and were uncommonly fitted to impress the imagination.

From all this it results, that the imagery of the sacred poets is, in a high degree, expressive and natural; it is copied directly from real objects, that were before their eyes; it has this advantage, of being more complete within itself, more entirely founded on national ideas and manners, than that of most other poets. In reading their works, we find ourselves continually in the land of Judea. The palm-trees, and the cedars of Lebanon, are ever rising in our view. The face of their territory, the circumstances of their climate, the manners of the people, and the august ceremonies of their religion, constantly pass under different forms before us.

The comparisons employed by the sacred poets are generally short, touching on one point only of resemblance, rather than branching out into little episodes. In this respect, they have perhaps an advantage over the Greek and Roman authors; whose comparisons, by the length to which they are extended, sometimes

interrupt the narration too much, and carry too visible marks of study and labour. Whereas, in the Hebrew poets, they appear more like the glowings of a lively fancy, just glancing aside to some resembling object, and presently returning to its track. Such is the following fine comparison, introduced to describe the happy influence of good government upon a people, in what are called the last words of David, recorded in the Second Book of Samuel (xxiii. 3.): 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth; even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.' This is one of the most regular and formal comparisons in the sacred books.

Allegory, likewise, is a figure frequently found in them. When formerly treating of this figure, I gave for an instance of it, that remarkably fine and well-supported allegory, which occurs in the eightieth Psalm, wherein the people of Israel are compared to a vine. Of parables, which form a species of allegory, the prophetical writings are full: and if to us they sometimes appear obscure, we must remember, that in those early times, it was universally the mode throughout all the eastern nations, to convey sacred truths under mysterious figures and representations.

But the poetical figure, which, beyond all others, elevates the style of Scripture, and gives it a peculiar boldness and sublimity, is prosopopœia, or personification. No personifications employed by any poets, are so magnificent and striking as those of the inspired writers. On great occasions, they animate every part of nature; especially, when any appearance or operation of the Almighty is concerned. 'Before him went the pestilence—the waters saw thee, O God, and were afraid—the mountains saw thee, and they trembled.—The overflowing of the water passed by;—the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.' When inquiry is made about the place of wisdom, Job introduces the 'Deep, saying, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not in me. Destruction and Death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.' That noted sublime passage in the book of Isaiah, which describes the fall of the King of Assyria, is full of personified objects; the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon breaking forth into exultation on the fall of the tyrant; hell from beneath stirring up all the dead to meet him at his coming; and the dead kings introduced as speaking, and joining in the triumph. In the same strain are these many lively and passionate apostrophes to cities and countries, to persons and things, with which the prophetical writings every where abound. 'O thou sword of the Lord! how long will it be, ere thou be quiet? put thyself up into the scabbard, rest and be still. How can it be quiet,' (as the reply is

instantly made,) 'seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Askelon, and the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it.' Jerem. xlvii. 6.

In general, for it would carry us too far to enlarge upon all the instances, the style of the poetical books of the Old Testament is, beyond the style of all other poetical works, fervid, bold, and animated. It is extremely different from that regular correct expression, to which our ears are accustomed in modern poetry. It is the burst of inspiration. The scenes are not coolly described, but represented as passing before our eyes. Every object, and every person, is addressed and spoken to, as if present; the transition is often abrupt; the connexion often obscure; the persons are often changed; figures crowded and heaped upon one another. Bold sublimity, not correct elegance, is its character. We see the spirit of the writer raised beyond himself, and labouring to find vent for ideas too mighty for his utterance.

After these remarks on the poetry of the Scripture in general, I shall conclude this dissertation, with a short account of the different kinds of poetical composition in the sacred books; and of the distinguishing characters of some of the chief writers.

The several kinds of poetical composition which we find in Scripture, are chiefly the didactic, elegiac, pastoral, and lyric. Of the didactic species of poetry, the Book of Proverbs is the principal instance. The nine first chapters of that book are highly poetical, adorned with many distinguished graces, and figures of expression. At the tenth chapter, the style is sensibly altered, and descends into a lower strain, which is continued to the end; retaining however that sententious, pointed manner, and that artful construction of period, which distinguish all the Hebrew poetry. The Book of Ecclesiastes comes likewise under this head; and some of the Psalms, as the 119th in particular.

Of elegiac poetry, many very beautiful specimens occur in Scripture; such as the lamentation of David over his friend Jonathan; several passages in the prophetical books; and several of David's Psalms, composed on occasions of distress and mourning. The 42d Psalm, in particular, is, in the highest degree, tender and plaintive. But the most regular and perfect elegiac composition in the Scripture, perhaps in the whole world, is the book, entitled the Lamentations of Jeremiah. As the prophet mourns in that book over the destruction of the temple, and the holy city, and the overthrow of the whole state, he assembles all the affecting images which a subject so melancholy could suggest. The composition is uncommonly artificial. By turns, the prophet and the city Jerusalem are introduced, as pouring forth their sorrows; and in the end, a chorus of the people send up the most earnest and plaintive supplications to God. The lines of the original too, as may, in part, ap-

pear from our translation, are longer than is usual in the other kinds of Hebrew poetry; and the melody is rendered thereby more flowing, and better adapted to the querimonious strain of elegy.

The Song of Solomon affords us a high exemplification of pastoral poetry. Considered with respect to its spiritual meaning, it is undoubtedly a mystical allegory; in its form, it is a dramatic pastoral, or a perpetual dialogue between personages in the character of shepherds; and, suitably to that form, it is full of rural and pastoral images, from beginning to end.

Of lyric poetry, or that which is intended to be accompanied with music, the Old Testament is full. Besides a great number of hymns and songs, which we find scattered in the historical and prophetical books, such as the song of Moses, the song of Deborah, and many others of like nature, the whole Book of Psalms is to be considered as a collection of sacred odes. In these we find the ode exhibited in all the varieties of its form, and supported with the highest spirit of lyric poetry; sometimes sprightly, cheerful, and triumphant; sometimes solemn and magnificent; sometimes tender and soft. From these instances, it clearly appears, that there are contained in the Holy Scriptures, full exemplifications of several of the chief kinds of poetical writing.

Among the different composers of the sacred books, there is an evident diversity of style and manner; and to trace their different characters in this view, will contribute not a little towards our reading their writings with greater advantage. The most eminent of the sacred poets are, the author of the Book of Job, David, and Isaiah. As the compositions of David are of the lyric kind, there is a greater variety of style and manner in his works than in those of the other two. The manner in which, considered merely as a poet, David chiefly excels, is the pleasing, the soft, and the tender. In his Psalms, there are many lofty and sublime passages; but in strength of description, he yields to Job; in sublimity, he yields to Isaiah. It is a sort of temperate grandeur for which David is chiefly distinguished; and to this he always soon returns, when, upon some occasions, he rises above it. The Psalms in which he touches us most, are those in which he describes the happiness of the righteous, or the goodness of God; expresses the tender breathing of a devout mind, or sends up moving and affectionate supplications to heaven. Isaiah is, without exception, the most sublime of all poets. This is abundantly visible in our translation; and, what is a material circumstance, none of the books of Scripture appear to have been more happily translated than the writings of this prophet. Majesty is his reigning character; a majesty more commanding, and more uniformly supported, than is to be found among the rest of the Old Testament poets. He

possesses, indeed, a dignity and grandeur, both in his conceptions and expressions, which is altogether unparelleled, and peculiar to himself. There is more clearness and order too, and a more visible distribution of parts, in his book, than in any other of the prophetical writings.

When we compare him with the rest of the poetical prophets, we immediately see, in Jeremiah, a very different genius. Isaiah employs himself generally on magnificent subjects. Jeremiah seldom discovers any disposition to be sublime, and inclines always to the tender and elegiac. Ezekiel, in poetical grace and elegance, is much inferior to them both; but he is distinguished by a character of uncommon force and ardour. To use the elegant expressions of Bishop Lowth, with regard to this prophet: 'Est atrox, vehemens, tragicus; in sensibus, fervidus, acerbus, indignabundus; in imaginibus, fecundus, truculentus, et nonnunquam penè deformis; in dictione grandiloquus, gravis, austerus, et interdum incultus; frequens in repetitionibus, non decoris aut gratiæ causa, sed ex indignatione et violentiâ. Quicquid susceperit tractandum id sedulò persequitur; in eo unicè hæret defixus; a proposito raro deflectens. In cæteris, a plerisque vatibus fortasse superatus; sed in eo genere, ad quod videtur a naturâ unicè comparatus, nimirum, vi, pondere, impetu, granditate, nemo unquam eum superavit.' The same learned writer compares Isaiah to Homer, Jeremiah to Simonides, and Ezekiel to Æschylus. Most of the Book of Isaiah is strictly poetical; of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, not above one half can be held to belong to poetry. Among the minor prophets, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and especially Nahum, are distinguished for poetical spirit. In the prophecies of Daniel and Jonah, there is no poetry.

It only now remains to speak of the Book of Job, with which I shall conclude. It is known to be extremely ancient; generally reputed the most ancient of all the poetical books; the author uncertain. It is remarkable, that this book has no connexion with the affairs or manners of the Jews, or Hebrews. The scene is laid in the land of Uz, or Idumea, which is a part of Arabia; and the imagery employed is generally of a different kind from what I before shewed to be peculiar to the Hebrew poets. We meet with no allusions to the great events of sacred history, to the religious rites of the Jews, to Lebanon, or to Carmel, or any of the peculiarities of the climate of Judea. We find few comparisons founded on rivers or torrents; these were not familiar objects in Arabia. But the longest comparison that occurs in the book, is to an object frequent and well known in that region, a brook that fails in the season of heat, and disappoints the expectation of the traveller.

The poetry, however, of the Book of Job is not only equal to

that of any other of the sacred writings, but is superior to them all, except those of Isaiah alone. As Isaiah is the most sublime, David the most pleasing and tender, so Job is the most descriptive, of all the inspired poets. A peculiar glow of fancy, and strength of description, characterize the author. No writer whatever abounds so much in metaphors. He may be said not to describe but to render visible, whatever he treats of. A variety of instances might be given. Let us remark only those strong and lively colours, with which, in the following passages, taken from the 18th and 20th chapters of his book, he paints the condition of the wicked; observe how rapidly his figures rise before us; and what a deep impression, at the same time, they leave on the imagination. 'Knowest thou not this of old,—since man was placed upon the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever. He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. The eye also which saw him, shall see him no more; they which have seen him shall say, Where is he? He shall suck the poison of asps; the viper's tongue shall slay him. In the fulness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits; every hand shall come upon him. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places. A fire not blown shall consume him. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart. His goods shall flow away in the day of wrath. The light of the wicked shall be put out; the light shall be dark in his tabernacle. The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. For he is cast into a net by his own feet. He walketh upon a snare. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side; and the robber shall prevail against him. Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. He shall be driven from light into darkness. They that come after him shall be astonished at his day. He shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.'

LECTURE XLII.

EPIC POETRY.

It now remains to treat of the two highest kinds of poetical writing, the Epic and the Dramatic. I begin with the epic. This Lecture shall be employed upon the general principles of that species of

composition: after which, I shall take a view of the character and genius of the most celebrated epic poets.

The epic poem is universally allowed to be, of all poetical works, the most dignified, and, at the same time, the most difficult in execution. To contrive a story which shall please and interest all readers, by being at once entertaining, important, and instructive; to fill it with suitable incidents; to enliven it with a variety of characters, and of descriptions; and, throughout a long work, to maintain that propriety of sentiment, and that elevation of style, which the epic character requires, is unquestionably the highest effort of poetical genius. Hence so very few have succeeded in the attempt, that strict critics will hardly allow any other poems to bear the name of epic, except the Iliad and the Æneid.

There is no subject, it must be confessed, on which critics have displayed more pedantry, than on this. By tedious disquisitions, founded on a servile submission to authority, they have given such an air of mystery to a plain subject, as to render it difficult for an ordinary reader to conceive what an epic poem is. By Bossu's definition, it is a discourse invented by art, purely to form the manners of men, by means of instructions disguised under the allegory of some important action, which is related in verse. This definition would suit several of Æsop's Fables, if they were somewhat extended, and put into verse; and, accordingly, to illustrate his definition, the critic draws a parallel, in form, between the construction of one of Æsop's Fables, and the plan of Homer's Iliad. The first thing, says he, which either a writer of fables, or of heroic poems, does, is to choose some maxim or point of morality; to inculcate which, is to be the design of his work. Next, he invents a general story, or a series of facts, without any names, such as he judges will be most proper for illustrating his intended moral. Lastly, he particularizes his story; that is, if he be a fabulist, he introduces his dog, his sheep, and his wolf; or if he be an epic poet, he looks out in ancient history for some proper names of heroes to give to his actors; and then his plan is completed.

This is one of the most frigid and absurd ideas that ever entered into the mind of a critic. Homer, he says, saw the Grecians divided into a great number of independent states; but very often obliged to unite into one body against their common enemies. The most useful instruction which he could give them in this situation, was, that a misunderstanding between princes is the ruin of the common cause. In order to enforce this instruction, he contrived, in his own mind, such a general story as this. Several princes join in a confederacy against their enemy. The prince, who was chosen as the leader of the rest, affronts one of the most valiant of the confederates, who thereupon withdraws himself, and refuses to take part in the common enterprise. Great misfortunes are the

consequence of this division; till, at length, both parties having suffered by the quarrel, the offended prince forgets his displeasure, and is reconciled to the leader; and union being once restored, there ensues complete victory over their enemies. Upon this general plan of his fable, adds Bossu, it was of no great consequence, whether, in filling it up, Homer had employed the names of beasts, like Æsop, or of men. He would have been equally instructive either way. But as he rather fancied to write of heroes, he pitched upon the wall of Troy for the scene of his fable; he feigned such an action to happen there; he gave the name of Agamemnon to the common leader; that of Achilles, to the offended prince; and so the Iliad arose.

He that can believe Homer to have proceeded in this manner, may believe any thing. One may pronounce, with great certainty, that an author who should compose according to such a plan; who should arrange all the subject, in his own mind, with a view to the moral, before he had ever thought of the personages who were to be the actors, might write, perhaps, useful fables for children; but as to an epic poem, if he adventured to think of one, it would be such as would find few readers. No person of any taste can entertain a doubt, that the first objects which strike an epic poet are, the hero whom he is to celebrate, and the action, or story, which is to be the groundwork of his poem. He does not sit down, like a philosopher, to form the plan of a treatise of morality. His genius is fired by some great enterprise, which, to him, appears noble and interesting; and which, therefore, he pitches upon as worthy of being celebrated in the highest strain of poetry. There is no subject of this kind, but will always afford some general moral instruction, arising from it naturally. The instruction which Bossu points out, is certainly suggested by the Iliad; and there is another which arises as naturally, and may just as well be assigned for the moral of that poem; namely, that Providence avenges those who have suffered injustice; but that when they allow their resentment to carry them too far, it brings misfortunes on themselves. The subject of the poem is the wrath of Achilles, caused by the injustice of Agamemnon. Jupiter avenges Achilles, by giving success to the Trojans against Agamemnon; but by continuing obstinate in his resentment, Achilles loses his beloved friend Patroclus.

The plain account of the nature of an epic poem is, the recital of some illustrious enterprise in a poetical form. This is as exact a definition as there is any occasion for on this subject. It comprehends several other poems besides the Iliad of Homer, the Æneid of Virgil, and the Jerusalem of Tasso; which are, perhaps, the three most regular and complete epic works that ever were composed. But to exclude all poems from the epic class, which

are not formed exactly upon the same model as these, is the pedantry of criticism. We can give exact definitions and descriptions of minerals, plants, and animals; and can arrange them with precision, under the different classes to which they belong, because nature affords a visible unvarying standard, to which we refer them. But with regard to works of taste and imagination, where nature has fixed no standard, but leaves scope for beauties of many different kinds, it is absurd to attempt defining, and limiting them, with the same precision. Criticism, when employed in such attempts, degenerates into trifling questions about words and names only. I therefore have no scruple to class such poems, as Milton's Paradise Lost, Lucan's Pharsalia, Statius's Thebaid, Ossian's Fingal and Temora, Camoens' Lusiad, Voltaire's Henriade, Cambray's Telemachus, Glover's Leonidas, Wilkie's Epigoniad, under the same species of composition with the Iliad and the Æneid; though some of them approach much nearer than others to the perfection of these celebrated works. They are, undoubtedly, all epic; that is, poetical recitals of great adventures; which is all that is meant by this denomination of poetry.

Though I cannot, by any means, allow, that it is the essence of an epic poem to be wholly an allegory, or a fable contrived to illustrate some moral truth, yet it is certain that no poetry is of a more moral nature than this. Its effect in promoting virtue, is not to be measured by any one maxim, or instruction, which results from the whole history, like the moral of one of Æsop's Fables. This is a poor and trivial view of the advantage to be derived from perusing a long epic work, that, at the end, we shall be able to gather from it some common-place morality. Its effect arises from the impression which the parts of the poem separately, as well as the whole taken together, make upon the mind of the reader: from the great examples which it sets before us, and the high sentiments with which it warms our hearts. The end which it proposes, is to extend our ideas of human perfection: or, in other words, to excite admiration. Now this can be accomplished only by proper representations of heroic deeds, and virtuous characters. For high virtue is the object, which all mankind are formed to admire; and, therefore, epic poems are, and must be, favourable to the cause of virtue. Valour, truth, justice, fidelity, friendship, piety magnanimity, are the objects which, in the course of such compositions, are presented to our minds, under the most splendid and honourable colours. In behalf of virtuous personages, our affections are engaged; in their designs, and their distresses, we are interested; the generous and public affections are awakened; the mind is purified from sensual and mean pursuits, and accustomed to take part in great, heroic enterprises. It is, indeed, no small testimony in honour of virtue, that several of the most refined and elegant

entertainments of mankind, such as that species of poetical composition which we now consider, must be grounded on moral sentiments and impressions. This is a testimony of such weight, that, were it in the power of sceptical philosophers, to weaken the force of those reasonings which establish the essential distinctions between vice and virtue, the writings of epic poets alone were sufficient to refute their false philosophy; shewing, by that appeal which they constantly make to the feelings of mankind in favour of virtue, that the foundations of it are laid deep and strong in human nature.

The general strain and spirit of epic composition, sufficiently mark its distinction from the other kinds of poetry. In pastoral writing, the reigning idea is innocence and tranquillity. Compassion is the great object of tragedy; ridicule, the province of comedy. The predominant character of the epic is, admiration excited by heroic actions. It is sufficiently distinguished from history, both by its poetical form, and the liberty of fiction which it assumes. It is a more calm composition than tragedy. It admits, nay requires, the pathetic and the violent, on particular occasions; but the pathetic is not expected to be its general character. It requires, more than any other species of poetry, a grave, equal, and supported dignity. It takes in a greater compass of time and action, than dramatic writing admits; and thereby allows a more full display of characters. Dramatic writings display characters chiefly by means of sentiments and passions; epic poetry, chiefly by means of actions. The emotions, therefore, which it raises, are not so violent, but they are more prolonged. These are the general characteristics of this species of composition. But, in order to give a more particular and critical view of it, let us consider the epic poem under three heads; first, with respect to the subject, or action; secondly, with respect to the actors, or characters; and lastly, with respect to the narration of the poet.

The action, or subject of the epic poem, must have three properties: it must be one; it must be great; it must be interesting.

First, it must be one action, or enterprise, which the poet chooses for his subject. I have frequently had occasion to remark the importance of unity, in many kinds of composition, in order to make a full and strong impression upon the mind. With the highest reason, Aristotle insists upon this, as essential to epic poetry; and it is, indeed, the most material of all his rules respecting it. For it is certain, that, in the recital of heroic adventures, several scattered and independent facts can never affect a reader so deeply, nor engage his attention so strongly, as a tale that is one and connected, where the several incidents hang upon one another, and are all made to conspire for the accomplishment of one end. In a regular epic, the more sensible this unity is rendered

to the imagination, the better will be the effect; and for this reason, as Aristotle has observed, it is not sufficient for the poet to confine himself to the actions of one man, or to those which happened during a certain period of time; but the unity must lie in the subject itself, and arise from all the parts combining into one whole.

In all the great epic poems, unity of action is sufficiently apparent. Virgil, for instance, has chosen for his subject, the establishment of Æneas in Italy. From the beginning to the end of the poem, this object is ever in our view, and links all the parts of it together with full connexion. The unity of the Odyssey is of the same nature; the return and re-establishment of Ulysses in his own country. The subject of Tasso, is the recovery of Jerusalem from the infidels; that of Milton, the expulsion of our first parents from Paradise; and both of them are unexceptionable in the unity of the story. The professed subject of the Iliad, is the anger of Achilles, with the consequences which it produced. The Greeks carry on many unsuccessful engagements against the Trojans, as long as they are deprived of the assistance of Achilles. Upon his being appeased and reconciled to Agamemnon, victory follows, and the poem closes. It must be owned, however, that the unity, or connecting principle, is not quite so sensible to the imagination here as in the Æneid. For, throughout many books of the Iliad, Achilles is out of sight; he is lost in inaction; and the fancy terminates on no other object, than the success of the two armies whom we see contending in war.

The unity of the epic action is not to be so strictly interpreted, as if it excluded all episodes, or subordinate actions. It is necessary to observe here, that the term episode is employed by Aristotle, in a different sense from what we now give to it. It was a term originally applied to dramatic poetry, and thence transferred to epic; and by episodes, in an epic poem, it should seem that Aristotle understood the extension of the general fable, or plan of the poem, into all its circumstances. What his meaning was, is, indeed, not very clear; and this obscurity has occasioned much altercation among critical writers. Bossu, in particular, is so perplexed upon this subject, as to be almost unintelligible. But dismissing so fruitless a controversy, what we now understand by episodes, are certain actions, or incidents, introduced into the narration, connected with the principal action, yet not of such importance as to destroy, if they had been omitted, the main subject of the poem. Of this nature are the interview of Hector with Andromache, in the Iliad; the story of Cacus, and that of Nisus and Euryalus, in the Æneid; the adventures of Tancred with Erminia and Clorinda, in the Jerusalem; and the prospect of his descendants exhibited to Adam, in the last books of Paradise Lost.

Such episodes as these, are not only permitted to an epic poet; but, provided they be properly executed, are great ornaments to his work. The rules regarding them are the following:

First, They must be naturally introduced; they must have a sufficient connexion with the subject of the poem; they must seem inferior parts that belong to it; not mere appendages stuck to it. The episode of Olinda and Sophronia, in the second book of Tasso's Jerusalem, is faulty, by transgressing this rule. It is too much detached from the rest of the work; and being introduced so near the opening of the poem, misleads the reader into an expectation, that it is to be of some future consequence; whereas it proves to be connected with nothing that follows. In proportion as any episode is slightly related to the main subject, it should always be the shorter. The passion of Dido in the Æneid, and the snares of Armida in the Jerusalem, which are expanded so fully in these poems, cannot with propriety be called episodes. They are constituent parts of the work, and form a considerable share of the intrigue of the poem.

In the next place, episodes ought to present to us, objects of a different kind, from those which go before, and those which follow, in the course of the poem. For it is principally for the sake of variety, that episodes are introduced into an epic composition. In so long a work, they tend to diversify the subject, and to relieve the reader, by shifting the scene. In the midst of combats therefore, an episode of the martial kind would be out of place; whereas, Hector's visit to Andromache in the Iliad, and Erminia's adventure with the Shepherd in the seventh book of the Jerusalem, afford us a well-judged and pleasing retreat from camps and battles.

Lastly, As an episode is a professed embellishment, it ought to be particularly elegant and well finished; and, accordingly, it is, for the most part, in pieces of this kind, that poets put forth their strength. The episodes of Teribazus and Ariana, in Leonidas, and of the death of Hercules, in the Epigoniad, are the two greatest beauties in these poems.

The unity of the epic action necessarily supposes, that the action be entire and complete; that is, as Aristotle well expresses it, that it have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Either by relating the whole, in his own person, or by introducing some of his actors to relate what had passed before the opening of the poem, the author must always contrive to give us full information of every thing that belongs to his subject; he must not leave our curiosity, in any article, ungratified; he must bring us precisely to the accomplishment of his plan; and then conclude.

The second property of the epic action, is, that it be great; that it have sufficient splendour and importance, both to fix our attention, and to justify the magnificent apparatus which the

poet bestows upon it. This is so evidently requisite as not to require illustration; and indeed, hardly any who have attempted epic poetry, have failed in choosing some object sufficiently important, either by the nature of the action, or by the fame of the personages concerned in it.

It contributes to the grandeur of the epic subject, that it be not of a modern date, nor fall within any period of history with which we are intimately acquainted. Both Lucan and Voltaire have, in the choice of their subjects, transgressed this rule, and they have, upon that account, succeeded worse. Antiquity is favourable to those high and august ideas which epic poetry is designed to raise. It tends to aggrandize, in our imagination, both persons and events; and, what is still more material, it allows the poet the liberty of adorning his subject by means of fiction. Whereas, as soon as he comes within the verge of real and authenticated history, this liberty is abridged. He must either confine himself wholly, as Lucan has done, to strict historical truth, at the expense of rendering his story jejune; or, if he goes beyond it, like Voltaire in his Henriade, this disadvantage follows, that, in well-known events, the true and the fictitious parts of the plan do not naturally mingle and incorporate with each other. These observations cannot be applied to dramatic writing; where the personages are exhibited to us, not so much that we may admire, as that we may love or pity them. Such passions are much more consistent with the familiar historical knowledge of the persons who are to be the objects of them; and even require them to be displayed in the light, and with the failings, of ordinary men. Modern, and well-known history, therefore, may furnish very proper materials for tragedy. But for epic poetry, where heroism is the groundwork, and where the object in view is to excite admiration, ancient or traditionary history is assuredly the safest region. There the author may lay hold on names, and characters, and events, not wholly unknown, on which to build his story; while, at the same time, by reason of the distance of the period, or of the remoteness of the scene, sufficient licence is left him for fiction and invention.

The third property required in the epic poem, is, that it be interesting. It is not sufficient for this purpose that it be great. For deeds of mere valour, how heroic soever, may prove cold and tiresome. Much will depend on the happy choice of some object, which shall, by its nature, interest the public; as when the poet selects for his hero, one who is the founder, or the deliverer, or the favourite, of his nation; or when he writes of achievements that have been highly celebrated, or have been connected with important consequences to any public cause. Most of the great epic poems are abundantly fortunate in this respect, and must have

been very interesting to those ages and countries in which they were composed.

But the chief circumstance which renders an epic poem interesting, and which tends to interest, not one age or country alone, but all readers, is the skilful conduct of the author in the management of his subject. He must so contrive his plan, as that it shall comprehend many affecting incidents He must not dazzle us perpetually with valiant achievements; for all readers tire of constant fighting and battles; but he must study to touch our hearts. He may sometimes be awful and august; he must often be tender and pathetic; he must give us gentle and pleasing scenes of love, friendship, and affection. The more an epic poem abounds with situations which awaken the feelings of humanity, the more interesting it is; and these form, always, the favourite passages of the work. I know no epic poets so happy in this respect as Virgil and Tasso.

Much, too, depends on the characters of the heroes, for rendering the poem interesting; that they be such as shall strongly attach the readers, and make them take part in the dangers which the heroes encounter. These dangers, or obstacles, form what is called the Nodus, or the Intrigue of the epic poem; in the judicious conduct of which consists much of the poet's art. He must rouse our attention by a prospect of the difficulties which seem to threaten disappointment to the enterprise of his favourite personages; he must make these difficulties grow and thicken upon us, by degrees; till, after having kept us, for some time, in a state of agitation and suspense, he paves the way, by a proper preparation of incidents, for the winding-up of the plot in a natural and probable manner. It is plain that every tale which is designed to engage attention, must be conducted on a plan of this sort.

A question has been moved, whether the nature of the epic poem does not require that it should always end successfully? Most critics are inclined to think, that a successful issue is the most proper; and they appear to have reason on their side. An unhappy conclusion depresses the mind, and is opposite to the elevating emotions which belong to this species of poetry. Terror and compassion are the proper subjects of tragedy; but as the epic poem is of larger compass and extent, it were too much, if, after the difficulties and troubles which commonly abound in the progress of the poem, the author should bring them all at last to an unfortunate issue. Accordingly, the general practice of epic poets is on the side of a prosperous conclusion; not, however, without some exceptions. For two authors of great name, Lucan and Milton, have held a contrary course; the one concluding with the subversion of the Roman liberty; the other, with the expulsion of man from Paradise.

With regard to the time or duration of the epic action, no precise boundaries can be ascertained. A considerable extent is always allowed to it, as it does not necessarily depend on those violent passions which can be supposed to have only a short continuance. The Iliad, which is formed upon the anger of Achilles, has, with propriety, the shortest duration of any of the great epic poems. According to Bossu, the action lasts no longer than forty-seven days. The action of the Odyssey, computed from the taking of Troy to the peace of Ithaca, extends to eight years and a half; and the action of the Æneid, computed in the same way, from the taking of Troy to the death of Turnus, includes about six years. But if we measure the period only of the poet's own narration, or compute from the time in which the hero makes his first appearance, till the conclusion, the duration of both these last poems is brought within a much smaller compass. The Odyssey, beginning with Ulysses in the island of Calypso, comprehends fifty-eight days only; and the Æneid, beginning with the storm, which throws Æneas upon the coast of Africa, is reckoned to include, at the most, a year and some months.

Having thus treated of the epic action, or the subject of the poem, I proceed next to make some observations on the actors or personages.

As it is the business of an epic poet, to copy after nature, and to form a probable interesting tale, he must study to give all his personages proper and well-supported characters, such as display the features of human nature. This is what Aristotle calls, giving manners to the poem. It is by no means necessary, that all his actors be morally good; imperfect, nay, vicious characters, may find a proper place; though the nature of epic poetry seems to require, that the principal figures exhibited should be such as tend to raise admiration and love, rather than hatred or contempt. But whatever the character be which a poet gives to any of his actors, he must take great care to preserve it uniform, and consistent with itself. Every thing which that person says, or does, must be suited to it, and must serve to distinguish him from any other.

Poetic characters may be divided into two kinds, general and particular. General characters are, such as wise, brave, virtuous, without any farther distinction. Particular characters express the species of bravery, of wisdom, of virtue, for which any one is eminent. They exhibit the peculiar features which distinguish one individual from another, which mark the difference of the same moral quality in different men, according as it is combined with other dispositions in their temper. In drawing such particular characters, genius is chiefly exerted. How far each of the three great epic poets have distinguished themselves in this part of com-

position, I shall have occasion afterward to shew, when I come to make remarks upon their works. It is sufficient now to mention, that it is in this part Homer has principally excelled; Tasso has come the nearest to Homer; and Virgil has been the most deficient.

It has been the practice of all epic poets, to select some one personage, whom they distinguish above all the rest, and make the hero of the tale. This is considered as essential to epic composition, and is attended with several advantages. It renders the unity of the subject more sensible, when there is one principal figure, to which, as to a centre, all the rest refer. It tends to interest us more in the enterprise which is carried on; and it gives the poet an opportunity of exerting his talents for adorning and displaying one character, with peculiar splendour. It has been asked, Who then is the hero of Paradise Lost? The devil, it has been answered by some critics; and, in consequence of this idea, much ridicule and censure has been thrown upon Milton. But they have mistaken that author's intention, by proceeding upon a supposition, that in the conclusion of the poem, the hero must needs be triumphant. Whereas Milton followed a different plan, and has given a tragic conclusion to a poem, otherwise epic in its form. For Adam is undoubtedly his hero; that is, the capital and most interesting figure in his poem.

Besides human actors, there are personages of another kind, that usually occupy no small place in epic poetry; I mean the gods, or supernatural beings. This brings us to the consideration of what is called the machinery of the epic poem; the most nice and difficult part of the subject. Critics appear to me to have gone to extremes on both sides. Almost all the French critics decide in favour of machinery, as essential to the constitution of an epic poem. They quote that sentence of Petronius Arbiter, as if it were an oracle, 'per ambages, Deorumque ministeria, precipitandus est liber spiritus,' and hold, that though a poem had every other requisite that could be demanded, yet it could not be ranked in the epic class, unless the main action was carried on by the intervention of the gods. This decision seems to be founded on no principle or reason whatever, unless a superstitious reverence for the practice of Homer and Virgil. These poets very properly embellished their story by the traditional tales and popular legends of their own country; according to which, all the great transactions of the heroic times were intermixed with the fables of their deities. But does it thence follow, that in other countries, and other ages, where there is not the like advantage of current superstition, and popular credulity, epic poetry must be wholly confined to antiquated fictions, and fairy tales? Lucan has composed a very spirited poem, certainly of the epic kind,

where neither gods nor supernatural beings are at all employed. The author of Leonidas has made an attempt of the same kind, not without success: and beyond doubt, wherever a poet gives us a regular heroic story, well-connected in its parts, adorned with characters, and supported with proper dignity and elevation, though his agents be every one of them human, he has fulfilled the chief requisites of this sort of composition, and has a just title to be classed with epic writers.

But though I cannot admit that machinery is necessary or essential to the epic plan, neither can I agree with some late critics of considerable name, who are for excluding it totally, as inconsistent with that probability and impression of reality, which, they think, should reign in this kind of writing.* Mankind do not consider poetical writings with so philosophical an eye. They seek entertainment from them; and for the bulk of readers, indeed for almost all men, the marvellous has a great charm. It gratifies and fills the imagination; and gives room for many a striking and sublime description. In epic poetry, in particular, where admiration and lofty ideas are supposed to reign, the marvellous and supernatural find, if any where, their proper place. They both enable the poet to aggrandize his subject, by means of those august and solemn objects which religion introduces into it; and they allow him to enlarge and diversify his plan, by comprehending within it heaven, and earth, and hell, men and invisible beings, and the whole circle of the universe.

At the same time, in the use of this supernatural machinery, it becomes a poet to be temperate and prudent. He is not at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases. It must always have some foundation in popular belief. He must avail himself in a decent manner, either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives, or of which he writes, so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of nature. Whatever machinery he employs, he must take care not to overload us with it; not to withdraw human actions and manners too much from view, nor to obscure them under a cloud of incredible fictions. He must always remember, that his chief business is to relate to men, the actions and the exploits of men; that it is by these principally he is to interest us, and to touch our hearts; and that if probability be altogether banished from his work, it can never make a deep or a lasting impression. Indeed, I know nothing more difficult in epic poetry, than to adjust properly the mixture of the marvellous with the probable; so as to gratify and amuse us with the one, without sacrificing the other. I need hardly observe, that these observations affect not the conduct of Milton's work; whose plan being al-

* See Elem. of Criticism, ch. 22

together theological, his supernatural beings form not the machinery, but are the principal actors in the poem.

With regard to allegorical personages, fame, discord, love, and the like, it may be safely pronounced, that they form the worst machinery of any. In description they are sometimes allowable, and may serve for embellishment; but they should never be permitted to bear any share in the action of the poem. For being plain and declared fictions, mere names of general ideas, to which even fancy cannot attribute any existence as persons, if they are introduced as mingling with human actors, an intolerable confusion of shadows and realities arise, and all consistency of action is utterly destroyed.

In the narration of the poet, which is the last head that remains to be considered, it is not material, whether he relate the whole story in his own character, or introduce some of his personages to relate any part of the action that had passed before the poem opens. Homer follows the one method in his Iliad, and the other in his Odyssey. Virgil has, in this respect, imitated the conduct of the Odyssey; Tasso that of the Iliad. The chief advantage which arises from any of the actors being employed to relate part of the story is, that it allows the poet, if he chooses it, to open with some interesting situation of affairs, informing us afterward of what had passed before that period; and gives him the greater liberty of spreading out such parts of the subject as he is inclined to dwell upon in person, and of comprehending the rest within a short recital. Where the subject is of great extent, and comprehends the transactions of several years, as in the Odyssey and the Æneid, this method therefore seems preferable. When the subject is of smaller compass, and shorter duration, as in the Iliad and the Jerusalem, the poet may, without disadvantage, relate the whole in his own person.

In the proposition of the subject, the invocation of the muse, and other ceremonies of the introduction, poets may vary at their pleasure. It is perfectly trifling to make these little formalities the object of precise rule, any farther, than that the subject of the work should always be clearly proposed, and without affected or unsuitable pomp. For, according to Horace's noted rule, no introduction should ever set out too high, or promise too much, lest the author should not fulfil the expectations he has raised.

What is of most importance in the tenor of the narration is, that it be perspicuous, animated, and enriched with all the beauties of poetry. No sort of composition requires more strength, dignity, and fire, than the epic poem. It is the region within which we look for every thing that is sublime in description, tender in sentiment, and bold and lively in expression; and, therefore, though an author's plan should be faultless, and his story ever so well con-

ducted, yet if he be feeble, or flat in style, destitute of affecting scenes, and deficient in poetical colouring, he can have no success. The ornaments which epic poetry admits, must all be of the grave and chaste kind. Nothing that is loose, ludicrous, or affected, finds any place there. All the objects which it presents ought to be either great, or tender, or pleasing. Descriptions of disgusting or shocking objects should as much as possible be avoided; and therefore the fable of the Harpies, in the third book of the Æneid, and the allegory of Sin and Death, in the second book of Paradise Lost, had been better omitted in these celebrated poems.

LECTURE XLIII.

HOMER'S ILIAD AND ODYSSEY.—VIRGIL'S ÆNEID

As the epic poem is universally allowed to possess the highest rank among poetical works, it merits a particular discussion. Having treated of the nature of this composition, and the principal rules relating to it, I proceed to make some observations on the most distinguished epic poems, ancient and modern.

Homer claims, on every account, our first attention, as the father, not only of epic poetry, but, in some measure, of poetry in general. Whoever sits down to read Homer, must consider that he is going to read the most ancient book in the world, next to the Bible. Without making this reflection, he cannot enter into the spirit, nor relish the composition, of the author. He is not to look for the correctness, and elegance, of the Augustan age. He must divest himself of our modern ideas of dignity and refinement, and transport his imagination almost three thousand years back in the history of mankind. What he is to expect is a picture of the ancient world. He must reckon upon finding characters and manners that retain a considerable tincture of the savage state; moral ideas, as yet imperfectly formed; and the appetites and passions of men brought under none of those restraints, to which, in a more advanced state of society, they are accustomed; but bodily strength, prized as one of the chief heroic endowments; the preparing of a meal, and the appeasing of hunger, described as very interesting objects; and the heroes boasting of themselves openly, scolding one another outrageously, and glorying, as we should now think very indecently, over their fallen enemies.

The opening of the Iliad possesses none of that sort of dignity, which a modern looks for in a great epic poem. It turns on no higher subject, than the quarrel of two chieftains about a female

slave. The priest of Apollo beseeches Agamemnon to restore his daughter, who, in the plunder of a city, had fallen to Agamemnon's share of booty. He refuses. Apollo, at the prayer of his priest, sends a plague into the Grecian camp. The augur, when consulted, declares, that there is no way of appeasing Apollo, but by restoring the daughter of his priest. Agamemnon is enraged at the augur; professes that he likes this slave better than his wife Clytemnestra; but since he must restore her, in order to save the army, insists to have another in her place; and pitches upon Briseis, the slave of Achilles. Achilles, as was to be expected, kindles into rage at this demand; reproaches him for his rapacity and insolence, and, after giving him many hard names, solemnly swears, that, if he is to be thus treated by the general, he will withdraw his troops, and assist the Grecians no more against the Trojans. He withdraws accordingly. His mother, the goddess Thetis, interests Jupiter in his cause; who, to revenge the wrong which Achilles had suffered, takes part against the Greeks, and suffers them to fall into great and long distress; until Achilles is pacified, and reconciliation brought about between him and Agamemnon.

Such is the basis of the whole action of the Iliad. Hence rise all those 'speciosa miracula,' as Horace terms them, which fill that extraordinary poem; and which have had the power of interesting almost all the nations of Europe during every age, since the days of Homer. The general admiration commanded by a poetical plan, so very different from what any one would have formed in our times, ought not, upon reflection, to be matter of surprise. For, besides that a fertile genius can enrich and beautify any subject on which it is employed, it is to be observed, that ancient manners, how much soever they contradict our present notions of dignity and refinement, afford, nevertheless, materials for poetry, superior, in some respects, to those which are furnished by a more polished state of society. They discover human nature more open and undisguised, without any of those studied forms of behaviour which now conceal men from one another. They give free scope to the strongest and most impetuous emotions of the mind, which make a better figure in description, than calm and temperate feelings. They shew us our native prejudices, appetites, and desires, exerting themselves without control. From this state of manners, joined with the advantage of that strong and expressive style, which, as I formerly observed, commonly distinguishes the compositions of early ages, we have ground to look for more of the boldness, ease, and freedom of native genius, in compositions of such a period, than in those of more civilized times. And, accordingly, the two great characters of the Homeric poetry are, fire and simplicity. Let us now proceed to make some more particular observations on the Iliad, under the three

heads of the subject and action, the characters, and narration of the poet.

The subject of the Iliad must unquestionably be admitted to be, in the main, happily chosen. In the days of Homer, no object could be more splendid and dignified than the Trojan war. So great a confederacy of the Grecian states, under one leader; and the ten years' siege which they carried on against Troy, must have spread far abroad the renown of many military exploits, and interested all Greece in the traditions concerning the heroes who had most eminently signalized themselves. Upon these traditions, Homer grounded his poem; and though he lived, as is generally believed, only two or three centuries after the Trojan war, yet, through the want of written records, tradition must, by this time, have fallen into the degree of obscurity most proper for poetry; and have left him at full liberty to mix as much fable as he pleased with the remains of true history. He has not chosen, for his subject, the whole Trojan war; but, with great judgment, he has selected one part of it, the quarrel betwixt Achilles and Agamemnon, and the events to which that quarrel gave rise; which, though they take up forty-seven days only, yet include the most interesting and most critical period of the war. By this management, he has given greater unity to what would have otherwise been an unconnected history of battles. He has gained one hero, or principal character, Achilles, who reigns throughout the work; and he has shewn the pernicious effect of discord among confederated princes. At the same time, I admit that Homer is less fortunate in his subject than Virgil. The plan of the Æneid includes a greater compass, and a more agreeable diversity of events; whereas the Iliad is almost entirely filled with battles.

The praise of high invention has in every age been given to Homer, with the greatest reason. The prodigious number of incidents, of speeches, of characters divine and human, with which he abounds; the surprising variety with which he has diversified his battles, in the wounds and deaths, and little history-pieces of almost all the persons slain, discover an invention next to boundless. But the praise of judgment is, in my opinion, no less due to Homer, than that of invention. His story is all along conducted with great art. He rises upon us gradually; his heroes are brought out, one after another, to be objects of our attention. The distress thickens, as the poem advances; and every thing is so contrived as to aggrandize Achilles, and to render him, as the poet intended he should be, the capital figure.

But that wherein Homer excels all writers is the characteristical part. Here, he is without a rival. His lively and spirited exhibition of characters is, in a great measure, owing to his being so dramatic a writer, abounding every where with dialogue and conver-

sation. There is much more dialogue in Homer than in Virgil; or, indeed, than in any other poet. What Virgil informs us of by two words of narration, Homer brings about by a speech. We may observe here, that this method of writing is more ancient than the narrative manner. Of this we have a clear proof in the books of the Old Testament, which, instead of narration, abound with speeches, with answers and replies, upon the most familiar subjects. Thus, in the Book of Genesis: 'Joseph said unto his brethren, Whence come ye? and they answered, From the land of Canaan we come to buy food. And Joseph said, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land are ye come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come; we are all one man's sons, we are true men, thy servants are no spies. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land are ye come. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold the youngest is this day with our father; and one is not. And Joseph said unto them, This it is that I spake unto you, saying ye are spies. Hereby ye shall be proved; by the life of Pharaoh, ye shall not go forth, except your youngest brother come hither,' &c. Genesis, xlii. 7—15. Such a style as this, is the most simple and artless form of writing, and must therefore, undoubtedly, have been the most ancient. It is copying directly from nature; giving a plain rehearsal of what passed, or was supposed to pass, in conversation between the persons of whom the author treats. In progress of time, when the art of writing was more studied, it was thought more elegant to compress the substance of conversation into short distinct narrative, made by the poet or historian in his own person; and to reserve direct speeches for solemn occasions only.

The ancient dramatic method which Homer practised has some advantages, balanced with some defects. It renders composition more natural and animated, and more expressive of manners and characters; but withal less grave and majestic, and sometimes tiresome. Homer, it must be admitted, has carried his propensity to the making of speeches too far; and if he be tedious any where, it is in these; some of them trifling, and some of them plainly unseasonable. Together with the Greek vivacity, he leaves upon our minds some impression of the Greek loquacity also. His speeches, however, are upon the whole characteristic and lively; and to them we owe, in a great measure, that admirable display which he has given of human nature. Every one who reads him, becomes familiarly and intimately acquainted with his heroes. We seem to have lived among them, and to have conversed with them. Not only has he pursued the single virtue of courage through all its different forms and features, in his dif-

ferent warriors; but some more delicate characters, into which courage either enters not at all, or but for an inconsiderable part, he has drawn with singular art.

How finely, for instance, has he painted the character of Helen, so as, notwithstanding her frailty and her crimes, to prevent her from being an odious object! The admiration with which the old generals behold her, in the third book, when she is coming towards them, presents her to us with much dignity. Her veiling herself, and shedding tears, her confusion in the presence of Priam, her grief and self-accusations at the sight of Menelaus, her upbraiding Paris for his cowardice, and, at the same time, her returning fondness for him, exhibit the most striking features of that mixed female character, which we partly condemn, and partly pity. Homer never introduces her, without making her say something to move our compassion; while, at the same time, he takes care to contrast her character with that of a virtuous matron, in the chaste and tender Andromache.

Paris himself, the author of all the mischief, is characterized with the utmost propriety. He is, as we should expect him, a mixture of gallantry and effeminacy. He retreats from Menelaus, on his first appearance; but, immediately afterward, enters into single combat with him. He is a great master of civility, remarkably courteous in his speeches; and receives all the reproofs of his brother Hector with modesty and deference. He is described as a person of elegance and taste. He was the architect of his own palace. He is, in the sixth book, found by Hector, burnishing and dressing up his armour; and issues forth to battle with a peculiar gaiety and ostentation of appearance, which is illustrated by one of the finest comparisons in all the Iliad, that of the horse prancing to the river.

Homer has been blamed for making his hero Achilles of too brutal and inamiable a character. But I am inclined to think, that injustice is commonly done to Achilles, upon the credit of two lines of Horace, who has certainly overloaded his character:

> Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
> Jura neget sibi nata · nihil non arroget armis.

Achilles is passionate, indeed, to a great degree; but he is far from being a contemner of laws and justice. In the contest with Agamemnon, though he carries it on with too much heat, yet he has reason on his side. He was notoriously wronged; but he submits; and resigns Briseis peaceably, when the heralds come to demand her; only, he will fight no longer under the command of a leader who had affronted him. Besides his wonderful bravery and contempt of death, he has several other qualities of a hero. He is open and sincere. He loves his subjects, and respects the

gods. He is distinguished by strong friendships and attachments; he is, throughout, high-spirited, gallant, and honourable; and allowing for a degree of ferocity which belonged to the times, and enters into the characters of most of Homer's heroes, he is, upon the whole, abundantly fitted to raise high admiration, though not pure esteem.

Under the head of characters, Homer's gods, or his machinery, according to the critical term, come under consideration. The gods make a great figure in the Iliad; much greater indeed than they do in the Æneid, or in any other epic poem; and hence Homer has become the standard of poetic theology. Concerning machinery in general, I delivered my sentiments in the former Lecture. Concerning Homer's machinery, in particular, we must observe, that it was not his own invention. Like every other good poet, he unquestionably followed the traditions of his country. The age of the Trojan war approached to the age of the gods, and demi-gods, in Greece. Several of the heroes concerned in that war were reputed to be the children of these gods. Of course, the traditionary tales relating to them, and to the exploits of that age, were blended with the fables of the deities. These popular legends, Homer very properly adopted; though it is perfectly absurd to infer from this, that therefore poets arising in succeeding ages, and writing on quite different subjects, are obliged to follow the same system of machinery.

In the hands of Homer, it produces, on the whole, a noble effect; it is always gay and amusing; often, lofty and magnificent. It introduces into his poem a great number of personages, almost as much distinguished by characters as his human actors. It diversifies his battles greatly by the intervention of the gods; and by frequently shifting the scene from earth to heaven, it gives an agreeable relief to the mind, in the midst of so much blood and slaughter. Homer's gods, it must be confessed, though they be always lively and animated figures, yet sometimes want dignity. The conjugal contentions between Juno and Jupiter, with which he entertains us, and the indecent squabbles he describes among the inferior deities, according as they take different sides with the contending parties, would be very improper models for any modern poet to imitate. In apology for Homer, however, it must be remembered, that according to the fables of those days, the gods are but one remove above the condition of men. They have all the human passions. They drink and feast, and are vulnerable like men, they have children and kinsmen, in the opposite armies; and except that they are immortal, that they have houses on the top of Olympus, and winged chariots, in which they are often flying down to earth, and then re-ascending, in order to feast on nectar and ambrosia; they are in truth no higher beings than the human

heroes, and therefore very fit to take part in their contentions. At the same time, though Homer so frequently degrades his divinities, yet he knows how to make them appear, in some conjunctures, with the most awful majesty. Jupiter, the father of gods and men, is, for the most part, introduced with great dignity; and several of the most sublime conceptions in the Iliad are founded on the appearances of Neptune, Minerva, and Apollo, on great occasions.

With regard to Homer's style and manner of writing, it is easy, natural, and in the highest degree animated. It will be admired by such only as relish ancient simplicity, and can make allowance for certain negligences and repetitions, which greater refinement in the art of writing has taught succeeding, though far inferior, poets to avoid. For Homer is the most simple in his style of all the great poets, and resembles most the style of the poetical parts of the Old Testament. They can have no conception of his manner, who are acquainted with him in Mr. Pope's translation only. An excellent poetical performance that translation is, and faithful in the main to the original. In some places, it may be thought to have even improved Homer. It has certainly softened some of his rudeness, and added delicacy and grace to some of his sentiments. But withal, it is no other than Homer modernized. In the midst of the elegance and luxuriancy of Mr. Pope's language, we lose sight of the old bard's simplicity. I know indeed no author, to whom it is more difficult to do justice in a translation, than Homer. As the plainness of his diction, were it literally rendered, would often appear flat in any modern language; so, in the midst of that plainness, and not a little heightened by it, there are every where breaking forth upon us flashes of native fire, of sublimity and beauty, which hardly any language, except his own, could preserve. His versification has been universally acknowledged to be uncommonly melodious, and to carry, beyond that of any poet, a resemblance in the sound to the sense and meaning.

In narration, Homer is, at all times, remarkably concise, which renders him lively and agreeable; though in his speeches, as I have before admitted, sometimes tedious. He is every where descriptive; and descriptive by means of those well-chosen particulars, which form the excellency of description. Virgil gives us the nod of Jupiter with great magnificence:

Annuit; et totum nutu tremefecit Olympum.

But Homer, in describing the same thing, gives us the sable eyebrows of Jupiter bent, and his ambrosial curls shaken, at the moment when he gives the nod; and thereby renders the figure more natural and lively. Whenever he seeks to draw our attention to some interesting object, he particularizes it so happily, as to paint it in a manner to our sight. The shot of Pandarus' arrow, which broke the truce between the two armies, as related in the

fourth book, may be given for an instance; and above all the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the sixth book; where all the circumstances of conjugal and parental tenderness, the child affrighted with the view of his father's helmet and crest, and clinging to the nurse; Hector putting off his helmet, taking the child into his arms, and offering up a prayer for him to the gods; Andromache receiving back the child with a smile of pleasure, and, at the same instant, bursting into tears, *δακρυοεν γελασασα*, as it is finely expressed in the original, form the most natural and affecting picture that can possibly be imagined.

In the description of battles, Homer particularly excels. He works up the hurry, the terror, and confusion of them in so masterly a manner, as to place the reader in the very midst of the engagement. It is here, that the fire of his genius is most highly displayed; insomuch, that Virgil's battles, and indeed those of most other poets, are cold and inanimated in comparison of Homer's.

With regard to similes, no poet abounds so much with them. Several of them are beyond doubt extremely beautiful: such as those of the fires in the Trojan camp compared to the moon and stars by night; Paris going forth to battle, to the war-horse prancing to the river; and Euphorbus slain, to the flowering shrub cut down by a sudden blast; all which are among the finest poetical passages that are any where to be found. I am not, however, of opinion that Homer's comparisons, taken in general, are his greatest beauties. They come too thick upon us; and often interrupt the train of his narration or description. The resemblance on which they are founded, is sometimes not clear; and the objects whence they are taken, are too uniform. His lions, bulls, eagles, and herds of sheep, recur too frequently; and the allusions in some of his similes, even after the allowances that are to be made for ancient manners, must be admitted to be debasing.*

* The severest critic upon Homer in modern times, M. la Motte, admits all that his admirers urge for the superiority of his genius and talents as a poet: 'C'étoit un génie naturellement poëtique, ami des fables et des merveilleux, et porté en général à l'imitation, soit des objets de la nature, soit des sentimens et des actions des hommes. Il avoit l'esprit vaste et fécond: plus elevé que délicat, plus naturel qu'ingenieux, et plus amoureux de l'abondance que du choix.—Il a saisi, par une supériorité de gout, les premieres idées de l'éloquence dans tous les genres; il a parlé le langage de toutes les passions; et il a du moins ouvert aux écrivains qui doivent le suivre une infinité de routes, qu'il ne restoit plus qu'à applanir. Il y a apparence que en quelques temps qu' Homère eût veçu, il eût été, du moins, le plus grand poëte de son païs: et a ne le prendre que dans ce sens, on peut dire, qu'il est le maitre de ceux mêmes qui l'ont surpassé.'—Discours sur Homère. Œuvres de la Motte, tome 2de. After these high praises of the author, he indeed endeavours to bring the merit of the Iliad very low. But his principal objections turn on the debasing ideas which are there given of the gods, the gross characters and manners of the heroes, and the imperfect morality of the sentiments; which, as Voltaire observes, is like accusing a painter for having drawn his figures in the dress of the times. Homer painted his gods, such as popular tradition then represented them; and described such characters and sentiments, as he found among those with whom he lived.

My observations, hitherto, have been made upon the Iliad only. It is necessary to take some notice of the Odyssey also. Longinus's criticism upon it is not without foundation, that Homer may in this poem be compared to the setting sun, whose grandeur still remains without the heat of his meridian beams. It wants the vigour and sublimity of the Iliad; yet, at the same time, possesses so many beauties, as to be justly entitled to high praise. It is a very amusing poem, and has much greater variety than the Iliad; it contains many interesting stories, and beautiful descriptions. We see every where the same descriptive and dramatic genius, and the same fertility of invention that appears in the other work. It descends indeed from the dignity of gods, and heroes, and warlike achievements; but in recompence, we have more pleasing pictures of ancient manners. Instead of that ferocity which reigns in the Iliad, the Odyssey presents us with the most amiable images of hospitality and humanity; entertains us with many a wonderful adventure, and many a landscape of nature; and instructs us by a constant vein of morality and virtue, which runs through the poem.

At the same time, there are some defects which must be acknowledged in the Odyssey. Many scenes in it fall below the majesty which we naturally expect in an epic poem. The last twelve books, after Ulysses is landed in Ithaca, are, in several parts, tedious and languid; and though the discovery, which Ulysses makes of himself to his nurse Euryclea, and his interview with Penelope before she knows him, in the nineteenth book, are tender and affecting, yet the poet does not seem happy in the great anagnorisis, or the discovery of Ulysses to Penelope. She is too cautious and distrustful, and we are disappointed of the surprise of joy, which we expected on that high occasion.

After having said so much of the father of epic poetry, it is now time to proceed to Virgil, who has a character clearly marked, and quite distinct from that of Homer. As the distinguishing excellences of the Iliad are, simplicity and fire; those of the Æneid are, elegance and tenderness. Virgil is, beyond doubt, less animated and less sublime than Homer; but to counterbalance this, he has fewer negligences, greater variety, and supports more of a correct and regular dignity throughout his work.

When we begin to read the Iliad, we find ourselves in the region of the most remote, and even unrefined antiquity. When we open the Æneid, we discover all the correctness, and improvements, of the Augustan age. We meet with no contentions of heroes about a female slave; no violent scolding, nor abusive language; but the poem opens with the utmost magnificence; with Juno, forming designs for preventing Æneas's establishment in Italy, and Æneas himself presented to us with all his fleet in the middle of a storm, which is described in the highest style of poetry.

The subject of the Æneid is extremely happy; still more so, in my opinion, than either of Homer's poems. As nothing could be more noble, nor carry more of epic dignity, so nothing could be more flattering and interesting to the Roman people, than Virgil's deriving the origin of their state from so famous a hero as Æneas. The object was splendid in itself; it gave the poet a theme, taken from the ancient traditionary history of his own country; it allowed him to connect his subject with Homer's stories, and to adopt his mythology; it afforded him the opportunity of frequently glancing at all the future great exploits of the Romans, and of describing Italy, and the very territory of Rome, in its ancient and fabulous state. The establishment of Æneas constantly traversed by Juno, leads to a great diversity of events, of voyages, and wars; and furnishes a proper intermixture of the incidents of peace with martial exploits. Upon the whole, I believe, there is no where to be found so complete a model of an epic fable, or story, as Virgil's Æneid. I see no foundation for the opinion entertained by some critics, that the Æneid is to be considered as an allegorical poem, which carries a constant reference to the character and reign of Augustus Cæsar; or that Virgil's main design in composing the Æneid, was to reconcile the Romans to the government of that prince, who is supposed to be shadowed out under the character of Æneas. Virgil, indeed, like the other poets of that age, takes every opportunity which his subject affords him, of paying court to Augustus.* But, to imagine that he carried a political plan in his view, through the whole poem, appears to me no more than a fanciful refinement. He had sufficient motives, as a poet, to determine him to the choice of his subject, from its being, in itself, both great and pleasing; from its being suited to his genius, and its being attended with the peculiar advantages, which I mentioned above, for the full display of poetical talents.

Unity of action is perfectly preserved; as, from beginning to end, one main object is always kept in view, the settlement of Æneas in Italy, by the order of the gods. As the story comprehends the transactions of several years, part of the transactions are very properly thrown into a recital made by the hero. The episodes are linked with sufficient connexion to the main subject; and the nodus, or intrigue of the poem, is, according to the plan of the ancient machinery, happily formed. The wrath of Juno, who opposes herself to the Trojan settlement in Italy, gives rise to all the difficulties which obstruct Æneas's undertaking, and connects the human with the celestial operations, throughout the whole work. Hence arise the tempest which throws Æneas upon

* As particularly in that noted passage of the sixth book, l. 791.
Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti sæpius audis, &c.

the shore of Africa; the passion of Dido, who endeavours to detain him at Carthage; and the efforts of Turnus, who opposes him in war. Till, at last, upon a composition made with Jupiter, that the Trojan name shall be for ever sunk in the Latin, Juno foregoes her resentment, and the hero becomes victorious.

In these main points, Virgil has conducted his work with great propriety, and shewn his art and judgment. But the admiration due to so eminent a poet, must not prevent us from remarking some other particulars in which he has failed. First, there are scarce any characters marked in the Æneid. In this respect it is insipid, when compared to the Iliad, which is full of characters and life. Achates, and Cloanthus, and Gyas, and the rest of the Trojan heroes who accompanied Æneas into Italy, are so many undistinguished figures, who are in no way made known to us, either by any sentiments which they utter, or any memorable exploits which they perform. Even Æneas himself is not a very interesting hero. He is described, indeed, as pious and brave; but his character is not marked with any of those strokes that touch the heart; it is a sort of cold and tame character; and, throughout his behaviour to Dido, in the fourth book, especially in the speech which he makes after she suspected his intention of leaving her, there appears a certain hardness, and want of relenting, which is far from rendering him amiable.* Dido's own character is by much the best supported, in the whole Æneid. The warmth of her own passions, the keenness of her indignation and resentment, and the violence of her whole character, exhibit a figure greatly more animated than any other which Virgil has drawn.

Besides this defect of character in the Æneid, the distribution and management of the subject are, in some respects, exceptionable. The Æneid, it is true, must be considered with the indulgence due to a work not thoroughly completed. The six last books are said not to have received the finishing hand of the author; and for this reason, he ordered, by his will, the Æneid to be committed to the flames. But though this may account for incorrectness of execution, it does not apologize for a falling off in the subject, which seems to take place in the latter part of the work. The wars with the Latins are inferior, in point of dignity, to the more interesting objects which had before been presented to us, in the destruction of Troy, the intrigue with Dido, and the descent into hell. And in those Italian wars, there is, perhaps, a more material fault still, in the conduct of the story. The reader, as Voltaire has observed, is tempted to take part with Turnus against Æneas. Turnus, a brave young prince, in love with Lavinia, his near rela-

* Num fletu ingemuit nostro? Num lumina flexit?
Num lachrymas victus dedit? Aut miseratus amantem est?
Æn. iv. 368.

tion, is destined for her by general consent, and highly favoured by her mother. Lavinia herself discovers no reluctance to the match; when there arrives a stranger, a fugitive from a distant region, who had never seen her, and who, founding a claim to an establishment in Italy upon oracles and prophecies, embroils the country in war, kills the lover of Lavinia, and proves the occasion of her mother's death. Such a plan is not fortunately laid, for disposing us to be favourable to the hero of the poem; and the defect might have been easily remedied, by the poet's making Æneas, instead of distressing Lavinia, deliver her from the persecution of some rival who was odious to her, and to the whole country.

But, notwithstanding these defects, which it was necessary to remark, Virgil possesses beauties which have justly drawn the admiration of ages, and which, to this day, hold the balance in equilibrium between his fame and that of Homer. The principal and distinguishing excellency of Virgil, and which, in my opinion, he possesses beyond all poets, is tenderness. Nature had endowed him with exquisite sensibility; he felt every affecting circumstance in the scenes he describes; and, by a single stroke, he knows how to reach the heart. This, in an epic poem, is the merit next to sublimity; and puts it in an author's power to render his composition extremely interesting to all readers.

The chief beauty, of this kind, in the Iliad, is, the interview of Hector with Andromache. But, in the Æneid, there are many such. The second book is one of the greatest master-pieces that ever was executed by any hand; and Virgil seems to have put forth there the whole strength of his genius, as the subject afforded a variety of scenes, both of the awful and tender kind. The images of horror, presented by a city burned and sacked in the night, are finely mixed with pathetic and affecting incidents. Nothing, in any poet, is more beautifully described than the death of old Priam; and the family-pieces of Æneas, Anchises, and Creusa, are as tender as can be conceived. In many passages of the Æneid, the same pathetic spirit shines; and they have been always the favourite passages in that work. The fourth book for instance, relating the unhappy passion and death of Dido, has been always most justly admired, and abounds with beauties of the highest kind. The interview of Æneas with Andromache and Helenus, in the third book; the episodes of Pallas and Evander, of Nisus and Euryalus, of Lausus and Mezentius, in the Italian wars, are all striking instances of the poet's power of raising the tender emotions. For we must observe, that though the Æneid be an unequal poem, and, in some places, languid, yet there are beauties scattered through it all; and not a few, even in the last six books. The best and most finished books, upon the whole, are,

the first, the second, the fourth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth, and the twelfth.

Virgil's battles are far inferior to Homer's in point of fire and sublimity: but there is one important episode, the descent into hell, in which he has outdone Homer in the Odyssey, by many degrees. There is nothing in all antiquity equal, in its kind, to the sixth book of the Æneid. The scenery and the objects are great and striking, and fill the mind with that solemn awe, which was to be expected from a view of the invisible world. There runs through the whole description, a certain philosophical sublime; which Virgil's Platonic genius, and the enlarged ideas of the Augustan age, enabled him to support with a degree of majesty, far beyond what the rude ideas of Homer's age suffered him to attain. With regard to the sweetness and beauty of Virgil's numbers, throughout his whole works, they are so well known, that it were needless to enlarge in the praise of them.

Upon the whole, as to the comparative merit of these two great princes of epic poetry, Homer and Virgil; the former must, undoubtedly, be admitted to be the greater genius; the latter, to be the more correct writer. Homer was an original in his art, and discovers both the beauties and the defects which are to be expected in an original author, compared with those who succeed him; more boldness, more nature and ease, more sublimity and force; but greater irregularities and negligences in composition. Virgil has, all along, kept his eye upon Homer; in many places, he has not so much imitated, as he has literally translated him. The description of the storm, for instance, in the first Æneid, and Æneas's speech upon that occasion, are translations from the fifth book of the Odyssey; not to mention almost all the similes of Virgil, which are no other than copies of those of Homer. The pre-eminence in invention, therefore, must, beyond doubt, be ascribed to Homer. As to the pre-eminence in judgment, though many critics are disposed to give it to Virgil, yet, in my opinion, it hangs doubtful. In Homer, we discern all the Greek vivacity; in Virgil, all the Roman stateliness. Homer's imagination is by much the most rich and copious; Virgil's, the most chaste and correct. The strength of the former lies in his power of warming the fancy; that of the latter, in his power of touching the heart. Homer's style is more simple and animated; Virgil's more elegant and uniform. The first has, on many occasions, a sublimity to which the latter never attains; but the latter, in return, never sinks below a certain degree of epic dignity, which cannot so clearly be pronounced of the former. Not, however, to detract from the admiration due to both these great poets, most of Homer's defects may reasonably be imputed, not to his genius, but to the manners of the age in which he lived; and for the

feeble passages of the Æneid, this excuse ought to be admitted, that the Æneid was left an unfinished work.

LECTURE XLIV.

LUCAN'S PHARSALIA—TASSO'S JERUSALEM—CAMOENS' LUSIAD—FENELON'S TELEMACHUS—VOLTAIRE'S HENRIADE—MILTON'S PARADISE LOST.

After Homer and Virgil, the next great epic poet of ancient times, who presents himself, is Lucan. He is a poet who deserves our attention, on account of a very peculiar mixture of great beauties with great faults. Though his Pharsalia discover too little invention, and be conducted in too historical a manner, to be accounted a perfectly regular epic poem, yet it were the mere squeamishness of criticism, to exclude it from the epic class. The boundaries, as I formerly remarked, are far from being ascertained by any such precise limit, that we must refuse the epic name to a poem, which treats of great and heroic adventures, because it is not exactly conformable to the plans of Homer and Virgil. The subject of the Pharsalia carries, undoubtedly, all the epic grandeur and dignity; neither does it want unity of object, viz. the triumph of Cæsar over the Roman liberty. As it stands at present, it is, indeed, brought to no proper close. But either time has deprived us of the last books, or it has been left by the author an incomplete work.

Though Lucan's subject be abundantly heroic, yet I cannot reckon him happy in the choice of it. It has two defects. The one is, that civil wars, especially when as fierce and cruel as those of the Romans, present too many shocking objects to be fit for epic poetry, and give odious and disgusting views of human nature. Gallant and honourable achievements furnish a more proper theme for the epic muse. But Lucan's genius, it must be confessed, seems to delight in savage scenes; he dwells upon them too much; and, not content with those which his subject naturally furnished, he goes out of his way to introduce a long episode of Marius and Sylla's proscriptions, which abounds with all the forms of atrocious cruelty.

The other defect of Lucan's subject is, its being too near the times in which he lived. This is a circumstance, as I observed in a former Lecture, always unfortunate for a poet; as it deprives him of the assistance of fiction and machinery; and thereby renders his work less splendid and amusing. Lucan has submitted to this disadvantage of his subject; and in doing so, has acted with more propriety, than if he had made an unseasonable attempt to embellish

it with machinery; for the fables of the gods would have made a very unnatural mixture with the exploits of Cæsar and Pompey; and instead of raising, would have diminished the dignity of such recent and well-known facts.

With regard to characters, Lucan draws them with spirit and with force. But though Pompey be his professed hero, he does not succeed in interesting us much in his favour. Pompey is not made to possess any high distinction, either for magnanimity in sentiment, or bravery in action; but, on the contrary, is always eclipsed by the superior abilities of Cæsar. Cato is, in truth, Lucan's favourite character, and wherever he introduces him, he appears to rise above himself. Some of the noblest, and most conspicuous passages in the work, are such as relate to Cato; either speeches put into his mouth, or descriptions of his behaviour. His speech, in particular, to Labienus, who urged him to inquire at the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, concerning the issue of the war [book ix. 564.], deserves to be remarked, as equal, for moral sublimity, to any thing that is to be found in all antiquity.

In the conduct of the story, our author has attached himself too much to chronological order. This renders the thread of his narration broken and interrupted, and makes him hurry us too often from place to place. He is too digressive also; frequently turning aside from his subject, to give us, sometimes, geographical descriptions of a country; sometimes, philosophical disquisitions concerning natural objects; as, concerning the African serpents in the ninth book, and the sources of the Nile in the tenth.

There are, in the Pharsalia, several very poetical and spirited descriptions. But the author's chief strength does not lie, either in narration or description. His narration is often dry and harsh: his descriptions are often overwrought, and employed too much upon disagreeable objects. His principal merit consists in his sentiments, which are generally noble and striking, and expressed in that glowing and ardent manner, which peculiarly distinguishes him. Lucan is the most philosophical, and the most public-spirited poet of all antiquity. He was the nephew of the famous Seneca, the philosopher; was himself a stoic; and the spirit of that philosophy breathes throughout his poem. We must observe too, that he is the only ancient epic poet whom the subject of his poem really and deeply interested. Lucan recounted no fiction. He was a Roman, and had felt all the direful effects of the Roman civil wars, and of that severe despotism which succeeded the loss of liberty. His high and bold spirit made him enter deeply into this subject, and kindle, on many occasions, into the most real warmth. Hence, he abounds in exclamations and apostrophes, which are, almost always, well-timed, and supported with a vivacity and fire that do him no small honour.

But it is the fate of this poet, that his beauties can never be mentioned, without their suggesting his blemishes also. As his principal excellency is a lively and glowing genius, which appears sometimes in his descriptions, and very often in his sentiments, his great defect in both is want of moderation. He carries every thing to an extreme. He knows not where to stop. From an effort to aggrandize his objects, he becomes tumid and unnatural: and it frequently happens, that where the second line of one of his descriptions is sublime, the third, in which he meant to rise still higher, is perfectly bombast. Lucan lived in an age, when the schools of the declaimers had begun to corrupt the eloquence and taste of Rome. He was not free from the infection; and too often, instead of shewing the genius of the poet, betrays the spirit of the declaimer.

On the whole, however, he is an author of lively and original genius. His sentiments are so high, and his fire, on occasions, so great, as to atone for many of his defects; and passages may be produced from him, which are inferior to none in any poet whatever. The characters, for instance, which he draws of Pompey and Cæsar in the first book, are masterly; and the comparison of Pompey to the aged decaying oak, is highly poetical:

—— totus popularibus auris
Impelli, plausuque sui gaudere theatri;
Nec reparare novas vires, multumque priori
Credere fortunæ; stat magni nominis umbra.
Qualis, frugifero quercus sublimis in agro,
Exuvias veteres populi, sacrataque gestans
Dona ducum: nec jam validis radicibus hærens,
Pondere fixa suo est; nudosque per aëra ramos
Effundens, trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram.
At quamvis primo nutet casura sub Euro,
Et circum sylvæ firmo se robore tollant,
Sola tamen colitur. Sed non in Cæsare tantum
Nomen erat, nec fama ducis; sed nescia virtus
Stare loco; solusque pudor non vincere bello;
Acer et indomitus.* —— L. i. 32.

With gifts and liberal bounty sought for fame,
And loved to hear the vulgar shout his name;
In his own theatre rejoiced to sit,
Amidst the noisy praises of the pit.
Careless of future ills that might betide,
No aid he sought to prop his falling side,
But on his former fortune much relied.
Still, seem'd he to possess, and fill his place;
But stood the shadow of what once he was.
So, in the field with Ceres' bounty spread,
Uprears some ancient oak his rev'rend head
Chaplets, and sacred gifts his boughs adorn,
And spoils of war by mighty heroes worn;

But when we consider the whole execution of his poem, we are obliged to pronounce, that his poetical fire was not under the government of either sound judgment, or correct taste. His genius had strength, but not tenderness; nothing of what may be called amenity, or sweetness. In his style, there is abundance of force; but a mixture of harshness, and frequently of obscurity, occasioned by his desire of expressing himself in a pointed and unusual manner. Compared with Virgil, he may be allowed to have more fire and higher sentiments, but in every thing else, falls infinitely below him, particularly in purity, elegance, and tenderness.

As Statius and Silius Italicus, though they be poets of the epic class, are too inconsiderable for particular criticism, I proceed next to Tasso, the most distinguished epic poet in modern ages.

His 'Jerusalem Delivered,' was published in the year 1574. It is a poem regularly and strictly epic, in its whole construction; and adorned with all the beauties that belong to that species of composition. The subject is, the recovery of Jerusalem from the Infidels, by the united powers of Christendom; which, in itself, more especially according to the ideas of Tasso's age, was a splendid, venerable, and heroic enterprise. The opposition of the Christians to the Saracens, forms an interesting contrast. The subject produces none of those fierce and shocking scenes of civil discord, which hurt the mind in Lucan, but exhibits the efforts of zeal and bravery, inspired by an honourable object. The share which religion possesses in the enterprise, both tends to render it more august, and opens a natural field for machinery, and sublime description. The action too lies in a country, and at a period of time, sufficiently remote to allow an intermixture of fabulous tradition and fiction with true history.

In the conduct of the story, Tasso has shewn a rich and fertile

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But the first vigour of his root now gone,
He stands dependant on his weight alone;
All bare his naked branches are display'd,
And with his leafless trunk he forms a shade.
Yet though the winds his ruin daily threat,
As every blast would heave him from his seat;
Though thousand fairer trees the field supplies,
That rich in youthful verdure round him rise,
Fix'd in his ancient seat, he yields to none,
And wears the honours of the grove alone.
But Cæsar's greatness, and his strength was more,
Than past renown and antiquated power;
'Twas not the fame of what he once had been,
Or tales in old records or annals seen;
But 'twas a valour, restless, unconfined,
Which no success could sate, nor limits bind;
'Twas shame, a soldier's shame, untaught to yield,
That blush'd for nothing but an ill-fought field.---ROWE.

invention, which, in a poet, is a capital quality. He is full of events; and those too abundantly various, and diversified in their kind. He never allows us to be tired by mere war and fighting. He frequently shifts the scene; and, from camps and battles, transports us to more pleasing objects. Sometimes the solemnities of religion; sometimes the intrigues of love; at other times, the adventures of a journey, or even the incidents of pastoral life, relieve and entertain the reader. At the same time, the whole work is artfully connected, and while there is much variety in the parts, there is perfect unity in the plan. The recovery of Jerusalem is the object kept in view through the whole, and with it the poem closes. All the episodes, if we except that of Olindo and Sophronia, in the second book, on which I formerly passed a censure, are sufficiently related to the main subject of the poem.

The poem is enlivened with a variety of characters, and those too both clearly marked and well supported. Godfrey, the leader of the enterprise, prudent, moderate, brave; Tancred, amorous, generous, and gallant, and well contrasted with the fierce and brutal Argantes; Rinaldo (who is properly the hero of the poem, and is in part copied after Homer's Achilles), passionate and resentful, seduced by the allurements of Armida; but a personage, on the whole, of much zeal, honour, and heroism. The brave and high-minded Solyman, the tender Erminia, the artful and violent Armida, the masculine Clorinda, are all of them well-drawn and animated figures. In the characteristical part, Tasso is indeed remarkably distinguished; he is, in this respect, superior to Virgil; and yields to no poet, except Homer.

He abounds very much with machinery; and in this part of the work his merit is more dubious. Wherever celestial beings are made to interpose, his machinery is noble. God looking down upon the hosts, and, on different occasions, sending an angel to check the Pagans, and to rebuke the evil spirits, produces a sublime effect. The description of hell too, with the appearance and speech of Satan, in the beginning of the fourth book, is extremely striking; and plainly has been imitated by Milton, though he must be allowed to have improved upon it. But the devils, the enchanters, and the conjurers, act too great a part throughout Tasso's poem; and form a sort of dark and gloomy machinery, not pleasing to the imagination. The enchanted wood, on which the nodus, or intrigue of the poem, is made in a great measure to depend; the messengers sent in quest of Rinaldo, in order that he may break the charm; their being conducted by a hermit to a cave in the centre of the earth; the wonderful voyage which they make to the fortunate islands; and their recovering Rinaldo from the charms of Armida and voluptuousness; are scenes which, though very amusing, and described with the highest beauty of

poetry, yet must be confessed to carry the marvellous to a degree of extravagance.

In general, that for which Tasso is most liable to censure, is a certain romantic vein, which runs through many of the adventures and incidents of his poem. The objects which he presents to us are always great; but sometimes too remote from probability. He retains somewhat of the taste of his age, which was not reclaimed from an extravagant admiration of the stories of knight-errantry; stories, which the wild, but rich and agreeable, imagination of Ariosto, had raised into fresh reputation. In apology, however, for Tasso, it may be said, that he is not more marvellous and romantic than either Homer or Virgil. All the difference is, that in the one we find the romance of paganism, in the other that of chivalry.

With all the beauties of description, and of poetical style, Tasso remarkably abounds. Both his descriptions, and his style, are much diversified, and well suited to each other. In describing magnificent objects, his style is firm and majestic; when he descends to gay and pleasing ones, such as Erminia's pastoral retreat in the seventh book, and the arts and beauty of Armida in the fourth book, it is soft and insinuating. Both those descriptions, which I have mentioned, are exquisite in their kind. His battles are animated, and very properly varied in the incidents; inferior however to Homer's in point of spirit and fire.

In his sentiments, Tasso is not so happy as in his descriptions. It is indeed rather by actions, characters, and descriptions, that he interests us, than by the sentimental part of the work. He is far inferior to Virgil in tenderness. When he aims at being pathetic and sentimental in his speeches, he is apt to become artificial and strained.

With regard to points and conceits, with which he has often been reproached, the censure has been carried too far. Affectation is by no means the general character of Tasso's manner, which, upon the whole, is masculine, strong, and correct. On some occasions, indeed, especially, as I just now observed, when he seeks to be tender, he degenerates into forced and unnatural ideas; but these are far from being so frequent or common as has been supposed. Threescore or fourscore lines retrenched from the poem, would fully clear it, I am persuaded, of all such exceptionable passages.

With Boileau, Dacier, and the other French critics of the last age, the humour prevailed of decrying Tasso; and passed from them to some of the English writers. But one would be apt to imagine, they were not much acquainted with Tasso; or at least they must have read him under the influence of strong prejudices. For to me it appears clear, that the Jerusalem is, in rank and dignity, the third regular epic poem in the world; and comes next to

the Iliad and Æneid. Tasso may be justly held inferior to Homer, in simplicity and in fire; to Virgil, in tenderness; to Milton, in daring sublimity of genius; but to no other he yields in any poetical talents; and for fertility of invention, variety of incidents, expression of characters, richness of description, and beauty of style, I know no poet, except the three just named, that can be compared to him.

Ariosto, the great rival of Tasso in Italian poetry, cannot, with any propriety, be classed among the epic writers. The fundamental rule of epic composition is, to recount an heroic enterprise, and to form it into a regular story. Though there is a sort of unity and connexion in the plan of Orlando Furioso, yet, instead of rendering this apparent to the reader, it seems to have been the author's intention to keep it out of view, by the desultory manner in which the poem is carried on, and the perpetual interruptions of the several stories before they are finished. Ariosto appears to have despised all regularity of plan, and to have chosen to give loose reins to a copious and rich but extravagant fancy. At the same time, there is so much epic matter in the Orlando Furioso, that it would be improper to pass it by without some notice. It unites indeed all sorts of poetry; sometimes comic and satiric; sometimes light and licentious; at other times, highly heroic, descriptive, and tender. Whatever strain the poet assumes, he excels in it. He is always master of his subject; seems to play himself with it, and leaves us sometimes at a loss to know whether he be serious or in jest. He is seldom dramatic; sometimes, but not often, sentimental; but in narration and description, perhaps no poet ever went beyond him. He makes every scene which he describes, and every event which he relates, pass before our eyes; and in his selection of circumstances, is eminently picturesque. His style is much varied, always suited to the subject, and adorned with a remarkably smooth and melodious versification.

As the Italians make their boast of Tasso, so do the Portuguese of Camoens; who was nearly contemporary with Tasso, but whose poem was published before the Jerusalem. The subject of it is the first discovery of the East Indies by Vasco de Gama; an enterprise splendid in its nature, and extremely interesting to the countrymen of Camoens; as it laid the foundation of their future wealth and consideration in Europe. The poem opens with Vasco and his fleet appearing on the ocean, between the island Madagascar, and the coast of Æthiopia. After various attempts to land on that coast, they are at last hospitably received in the kingdom of Melinda. Vasco, at the desire of the king, gives him an account of Europe, recites a poetical history of Portugal, and relates all the adventures of the voyage, which had preceded the opening of the poem. This recital takes up three cantos, or books. It is

well imagined; contains a great many poetical beauties; and has no defect, except that Vasco makes an unseasonable display of learning to the African prince, in frequent allusions to the Greek and Roman histories. Vasco and his countrymen afterward set forth to pursue their voyage. The storms and distresses which they encounter; their arrival at Calecut on the Malabar coast; their reception and adventures in that country, and at last their return homewards, fill up the rest of the poem.

The whole work is conducted according to the epic plan. Both the subject and the incidents are magnificent; and joined with some wildness and irregularity, there appear in the execution much poetic spirit, strong fancy, and bold description; as far as I can judge from translations, without any knowledge of the original. There is no attempt towards painting characters in the poem: Vasco is the hero, and the only personage indeed that makes any figure.

The machinery of the Lusiad is perfectly extravagant; not only is it formed of a singular mixture of Christian ideas, and Pagan mythology; but it is so conducted, that the Pagan gods appear to be the true deities, and Christ and the blessed Virgin to be subordinate agents. One great scope of the Portuguese expedition, our author informs us, is to propagate the Christian faith, and to extirpate Mahometanism. In this religious undertaking, the great protector of the Portuguese is Venus, and their great adversary is Bacchus, whose displeasure is excited by Vasco's attempting to rival his fame in the Indias. Councils of the gods are held, in which Jupiter is introduced, as foretelling the downfall of Mahometanism, and the propagation of the gospel. Vasco, in great distress from a storm, prays most seriously to God; implores the aid of Christ and the Virgin, and begs for such assistance as was given to the Israelites, when they were passing though the Red Sea, and to the Apostle Paul, when he was in hazard of shipwreck. In return to this prayer, Venus appears, who discerning the storm to be the work of Bacchus, complains to Jupiter, and procures the winds to be calmed. Such strange and preposterous machinery, shews how much authors have been misled by the absurd opinion, that there could be no epic poetry without the gods of Homer. Towards the end of the work, indeed, the author gives us an awkward salvo for his whole mythology; making the goddess Thetis inform Vasco, that she, and the rest of the heathen deities, are no more than names to describe the operations of Providence.

There is, however, some fine machinery of a different kind, in the Lusiad. The genius of the river Ganges, appearing to Emanuel, king of Portugal, in a dream, inviting that prince to discover his secret springs, and acquainting him that he was the destined monarch for whom the treasures of the east were reserved,

is a happy idea. But the noblest conception of this sort, is in the fifth canto, where Vasco is recounting to the king of Melinda, all the wonders which he met with in his navigation. He tells him, that when the fleet arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, which never before had been doubled by any navigator, there appeared to them on a sudden, a huge and monstrous phantom rising out of the sea, in the midst of tempests and thunders, with a head that reached the clouds, and a countenance that filled them with terror. This was the genius, or guardian, of that hitherto unknown ocean. It spoke to them with a voice like thunder; menacing them for invading those seas which he had so long possessed undisturbed; and for daring to explore those secrets of the deep, which never had been revealed to the eye of mortals; required them to proceed no farther; if they should proceed, foretold all the successive calamities that were to befal them; and then with a mighty noise disappeared. This is one of the most solemn and striking pieces of machinery that ever was employed; and is sufficient to shew that Camoens is a poet, though of an irregular, yet of a bold and lofty imagination.*

In reviewing the epic poets, it were unjust to make no mention of the amiable author of the Adventures of Telemachus. His work, though not composed in verse, is justly entitled to be held a poem. The measured poetical prose, in which it is written, is remarkably harmonious; and gives the style nearly as much elevation as the French language is capable of supporting, even in regular verse.

The plan of the work, is, in general, well contrived; and is deficient neither in epic grandeur, nor unity of object. The author has entered with much felicity into the spirit and ideas of the ancient poets, particularly into the ancient mythology, which retains more dignity, and makes a better figure in his hands, than in those of any other modern poet. His descriptions are rich and beautiful; especially of the softer and calmer scenes, for which the genius of Fenelon was best suited; such as the incidents of pastoral life, the pleasures of virtue, or a country flourishing in peace. There is an inimitable sweetness and tenderness in several of the pictures of this kind, which he has given.

The best executed part of the work, is the first six books, in which Telemachus recounts his adventures to Calypso. The narration, throughout them, is lively and interesting. Afterward, especially in the last twelve books, it becomes more tedious and languid; and in the warlike adventures which are attempted, there is

* I have made no mention of the Araucana, an epic poem, in Spanish, composed by Alonzo d'Ercilla, because I am unacquainted with the original language, and have not seen any translation of it. A full account of it is given by Mr. Hayley, in the notes upon his Essay on Epic Poetry.

a great defect of vigour. The chief objection against this work being classed with epic poems, arises from the minute details of virtuous policy into which the author in some places enters; and from the discourses and instructions of Mentor, which recur upon us too often; and too much upon the strain of common-place morality. Though these were well suited to the main design of the author, which was to form the mind of a young prince, yet they seem not congruous to the nature of epic poetry; the object of which is to improve us by means of actions, characters, and sentiments, rather than by delivering professed and formal instruction.

Several of the epic poets have described a descent into hell; and in the prospects they have given us of the invisible world, we may observe the gradual refinement of men's notions concerning a state of future rewards and punishments. The descent of Ulysses into hell, in Homer's Odyssey, presents to us a very indistinct and dreary sort of object. The scene is laid in the country of the Cimmerians, which is always covered with clouds and darkness, at the extremity of the ocean. When the spirits of the dead begin to appear, we scarcely know whether Ulysses is above ground, or below it. None of the ghosts, even of the heroes, appear satisfied with their condition in the other world; and when Ulysses endeavours to comfort Achilles, by reminding him of the illustrious figure which he must make in those regions, Achilles roundly tells him, that all such speeches are idle; for he would rather be a day-labourer on earth, than have the command of all the dead.

In the sixth book of the Æneid, we discern a much greater refinement of ideas, corresponding to the progress which the world had then made in philosophy. The objects there delineated are both more clear and distinct, and more grand and awful. The separate mansions of good and of bad spirits, with the punishments of the one, and the employments and happiness of the other, are finely described; and in consistency with the most pure morality. But the visit which Fenelon makes Telemachus pay to the shades, is much more philosophical still than Virgil's. He employs the same fables and the same mythology; but we find the ancient mythology refined by the knowledge of the true religion, and adorned with that beautiful enthusiasm, for which Fenelon was so distinguished. His account of the happiness of the just is an excellent description in the mystic strain; and very expressive of the genius and spirit of the author.

Voltaire has given us, in his Henriade, a regular epic poem, in French verse. In every performance of that celebrated writer, we may expect to find marks of genius; and accordingly, that work discovers, in several places, that boldness in the conceptions, and

that liveliness and felicity in the expression, for which the author is so remarkably distinguished. Several of the comparisons, in particular, which occur in it, are both new and happy. But considered upon the whole, I cannot esteem it one of his chief productions; and am of opinion, that he has succeeded infinitely better in tragic, than in epic composition. French versification seems ill adapted to epic poetry. Besides its being always fettered by rhyme, the language never assumes a sufficient degree of elevation or majesty; and appears to be more capable of expressing the tender in tragedy, than of supporting the sublime in epic. Hence a feebleness, and sometimes a prosaic flatness, in the style of the Henriade; and whether from this, or from some other cause, the poem often languishes. It does not seize the imagination; nor interest and carry the reader along, with that ardour which ought to be inspired by a sublime and spirited epic poem.

The subject of the Henriade, is the triumph of Henry the Fourth over the arms of the League. The action of the poem, properly includes only the siege of Paris. It is an action perfectly epic in its nature; great, interesting, and conducted with a sufficient regard to unity, and all the other critical rules. But it is liable to both the defects which I before remarked in Lucan's Pharsalia. It is founded wholly on civil wars; and presents to us those odious and detestable objects of massacres and assassinations, which throw a gloom over the poem. It is also, like Lucan's, of too recent a date, and comes too much within the bounds of well-known history. To remedy this last defect, and to remove the appearance of being a mere historian, Voltaire has chosen to mix fiction with truth. The poem, for instance, opens with a voyage of Henry's to England, and an interview between him and Queen Elizabeth; though every one knows that Henry never was in England, and that these two illustrious personages never met. In facts of such public notoriety, a fiction like this shocks the reader, and forms an unnatural and ill-sorted mixture with historical truth. The episode was contrived in order to give Henry an opportunity of recounting the former transactions of the civil wars, in imitation of the recital which Æneas makes to Dido in the Æneid. But the imitation was injudicious. Æneas might, with propriety, relate to Dido, transactions of which she was either entirely ignorant, or had acquired only an imperfect knowledge by flying reports. But Queen Elizabeth could not but be supposed to be perfectly apprised of all the facts, which the poet makes Henry recite to her.

In order to embellish his subject, Voltaire has chosen to employ a great deal of machinery. But here, also, I am obliged to censure his conduct; for the machinery, which he chiefly employs, is of the worst kind, and the least suited to an epic poem, that of allegorical beings. Discord, Cunning, and Love, appear as per-

sonages, mix with the human actors, and make a considerable figure in the intrigue of the poem. This is contrary to every rule of rational criticism. Ghosts, angels, and devils, have popular belief on their side, and may be conceived as existing. But every one knows, that allegorical beings are no more than representations of human dispositions and passions. They may be employed like other personifications and figures of speech; or in a poem, that is wholly allegorical, they may occupy the chief place. They are there in their native and proper region; but in a poem which relates to human transactions, as I had occasion before to remark, when such beings are described as acting along with men, the imagination is confounded; it is divided between phantasms and realities, and knows not on what to rest.

In justice, however, to our author, I must observe, that the machinery of St. Louis, which he also employs, is of a better kind, and possesses real dignity. The finest passage in the Henriade, indeed one of the finest that occurs in any poem, is the prospect of the invisible world, which St. Louis gives to Henry in a dream, in the seventh canto. Death bringing the souls of the departed in succession before God; their astonishment, when, arriving from all different countries and religious sects, they are brought into the divine presence; when they find their superstitions to be false, and have the truth unveiled to them; the palace of the destinies opened to Henry, and the prospect of his successors which is there given him; are striking and magnificent objects, and do honour to the genius of Voltaire.

Though some of the episodes in this poem are properly extended, yet the narration is, on the whole, too general; the events are too much crowded, and superficially related; which is, doubtless, one cause of the poem making a faint impression. The strain of sentiment which runs through it, is high and noble. Religion appears, on every occasion, with great and proper lustre; and the author breathes that spirit of humanity and toleration, which is conspicuous in all his works.

Milton, of whom it remains now to speak, has chalked out for himself a new, and very extraordinary road, in poetry. As soon as we open his Paradise Lost, we find ourselves introduced all at once into an invisible world, and surrounded with celestial and infernal beings. Angel and devils are not the machinery, but principal actors, in the poem; and what, in any other composition, would be the marvellous, is here only the natural course of events. A subject so remote from the affairs of this world, may furnish ground to those who think such discussions material, to bring it into doubt, whether Paradise Lost can properly be classed among epic poems. By whatever name it is to be called, it is, undoubtedly, one of the highest efforts of poetical genius; and in one great characteristic

of the epic poem, majesty and sublimity, it is fully equal to any that bear that name.

How far the author was altogether happy in the choice of his subject, may be questioned. It has led him into very difficult ground. Had he taken a subject that was more human, and less theological; that was more connected with the occurrences of life; and afforded a greater display of the characters and passions of men, his poem would, perhaps, have, to the bulk of readers, been more pleasing and attractive. But the subject which he has chosen, suited the daring sublimity of his genius.* It is a subject for which Milton alone was fitted; and in the conduct of it, he has shewn a stretch both of imagination and invention, which is perfectly wonderful. It is astonishing how, from the few hints given us in the sacred Scriptures, he was able to raise so complete and regular a structure; and to fill his poem with such a variety of incidents. Dry and harsh passages sometimes occur. The author appears, upon some occasions, a metaphysician and a divine, rather than a poet. But the general tenor of his work is interesting; he seizes and fixes the imagination; engages, elevates, and affects us as we proceed, which is always a sure test of merit in an epic composition. The artful change of his objects; the scene laid now in earth, now in hell, and now in heaven, affords a sufficient diversity; while unity of plan is, at the same time, perfectly supported. We have still life, and calm scenes, in the employments of Adam and Eve in Paradise; and we have busy scenes, and great actions, in the enterprise of Satan, and the wars of the angels. The innocence, purity, and amiableness of our first parents, opposed to the pride and ambition of Satan, furnishes a happy contrast, that reigns throughout the whole poem; only the conclusion, as I before observed, is too tragic for epic poetry.

The nature of the subject did not admit any great display of characters; but such as could be introduced, are supported with much propriety. Satan, in particular, makes a striking figure, and is indeed the best drawn character in the poem. Milton has not described him such as we suppose an infernal spirit to be. He has, more suitably to his own purpose, given him a human, that is, a mixed character, not altogether void of some good qualities. He is brave and faithful to his troops. In the midst of his impiety, he is not without remorse. He is even touched with pity for our first parents; and justifies himself in his design against them,

* 'He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful. He therefore chose a subject, on which too much could not be said; on which he might tire his fancy, without the censure of extravagance.' Dr. JOHNSON'S Life of Milton.

from the necessity of his situation. He is actuated by ambition and resentment, rather than by pure malice. In short, Milton's Satan is no worse than many a conspirator or factious chief that makes a figure in history. The different characters of Beelzebub, Moloch, Belial, are exceedingly well painted in those eloquent speeches which they make in the second book. The good angels, though always described with dignity and propriety, have more uniformity than the infernal spirits in their appearance; though among them, too, the dignity of Michael, the mild condescension of Raphael, and the tried fidelity of Abdiel, form proper characteristical distinctions. The attempt to describe God Almighty himself, and to recount dialogues between the Father and the Son, was too bold and arduous, and is that wherein our poet, as was to have been expected, has been most unsuccessful. With regard to his human characters; the innocence of our first parents, and their love, are finely and delicately painted. In some of his speeches to Raphael and to Eve, Adam is, perhaps, too knowing and refined for his situation. Eve is more distinctly characterized. Her gentleness, modesty, and frailty, mark very expressively a female character.

Milton's great and distinguishing excellence is, his sublimity. In this, perhaps, he excels Homer; as there is no doubt of his leaving Virgil, and every other poet, far behind him. Almost the whole of the first and second books of Paradise Lost are continued instances of the sublime. The prospect of hell and of the fallen host, the appearance and behaviour of Satan, the consultation of the infernal chiefs, and Satan's flight through chaos to the borders of this world, discover the most lofty ideas that ever entered into the conception of any poet. In the sixth book, also, there is much grandeur, particularly in the appearance of the Messiah; though some parts of that book are censurable; and the witticisms of the devils upon the effect of their artillery, form an intolerable blemish. Milton's sublimity is of a different kind from that of Homer. Homer's is generally accompanied with fire and impetuosity; Milton's possesses more of a calm and amazing grandeur. Homer warms and hurries us along; Milton fixes us in a state of astonishment and elevation. Homer's sublimity appears most in the description of actions; Milton's in that of wonderful and stupendous objects.

But though Milton is most distinguished for his sublimity, yet there is also much of the beautiful, the tender, and the pleasing, in many parts of his work. When the scene is laid in Paradise, the imagery is always of the most gay and smiling kind. His descriptions shew an uncommonly fertile imagination; and in his similes, he is, for the most part, remarkably happy. They are seldom improperly introduced; seldom either low or trite. They ge-

nerally present to us images taken from the sublime or the beautiful class of objects; if they have any faults, it is their alluding too frequently to matters of learning, and to fables of antiquity. In the latter part of Paradise Lost, there must be confessed to be a falling off. With the fall of our first parents, Milton's genius seems to decline. Beauties, however, there are, in the concluding books, of the tragic kind. The remorse and contrition of the guilty pair, and their lamentations over Paradise, when they are obliged to leave it, are very moving. The last episode of the angel's shewing Adam the fate of his posterity, is happily imagined; but, in many places, the execution is languid

Milton's language and versification have high merit. His style is full of majesty, and wonderfully adapted to his subject. His blank verse is harmonious and diversified, and affords the most complete example of the elevation which our language is capable of attaining by the force of numbers. It does not flow, like the French verse, in tame, regular, uniform melody, which soon tires the ear; but is sometimes smooth and flowing, sometimes rough; varied in its cadence, and intermixed with discords, so as to suit the strength and freedom of epic composition. Neglected and prosaic lines, indeed, we sometimes meet with; but, in a work so long, and in the main so harmonious, these may be forgiven.

On the whole, Paradise Lost is a poem that abounds with beauties of every kind, and that justly entitles its author to a degree of fame not inferior to any poet; though it must be also admitted to have many inequalities. It is the lot of almost every high and daring genius, not to be uniform and correct. Milton is too frequently theological and metaphysical; sometimes harsh in his language; often too technical in his words, and affectedly ostentatious of his learning. Many of his faults must be attributed to the pedantry of the age in which he lived. He discovers a vigour, a grasp of genius, equal to every thing that is great; if at some times he falls much below himself, at other times he rises above every poet, of the ancient or modern world.

LECTURE XLV.

DRAMATIC POETRY—TRAGEDY.

Dramatic poetry has, among all civilized nations, been considered as a rational and useful entertainment, and judged worthy of careful and serious discussion. According as it is employed upon the light and the gay, or upon the grave and affecting incidents of

human life, it divides itself into the two forms of comedy or tragedy. But as great and serious objects command more attention than little and ludicrous ones; as the fall of a hero interests the public more than the marriage of a private person; tragedy has been always held a more dignified entertainment than comedy. The one rests upon the high passions, the virtues, crimes and sufferings of mankind; the other on their humours, follies, and pleasures. Terror and pity are the great instruments of the former; ridicule is the sole instrument of the latter. Tragedy shall therefore be the object of our fullest discussion. This and the following Lecture shall be employed on it; after which I shall treat of what is peculiar to comedy.

Tragedy, considered as an exhibition of the characters and behaviour of men in some of the most trying and critical situations of life, is a noble idea of poetry. It is a direct imitation of human manners and actions. For it does not, like the epic poem, exhibit characters by the narration and description of the poet; but the poet disappears; and the personages themselves are set before us, acting and speaking what is suitable to their characters. Hence, no kind of writing is so great a trial of the author's profound knowledge of the human heart. No kind of writing has so much power, when happily executed, to raise the strongest emotions. It is, or ought to be, a mirror in which we behold ourselves, and the evils to which we are exposed; a faithful copy of the human passions, with all their direful effects, when they are suffered to become extravagant.

As tragedy is a high and distinguished species of composition, so also, in its general strain and spirit, it is favourable to virtue. Such power hath virtue happily over the human mind, by the wise and gracious constitution of our nature, that as admiration cannot be raised in epic poetry, so neither in tragic poetry can our passions be strongly moved, unless virtuous emotions be awakened within us. Every poet finds, that it is impossible to interest us in any character, without representing that character as worthy and honourable, though it may not be perfect; and that the great secret for raising indignation, is to paint the person who is to be the object of it, in the colours of vice and depravity. He may, indeed, nay, he must, represent the virtuous as sometimes unfortunate, because this is often the case in real life; but he will always study to engage our hearts in their behalf; and though they may be described as unprosperous, yet there is no instance of a tragic poet representing vice as fully triumphant and happy in the catastrophe of the piece. Even when bad men succeed in their designs, punishment is made always to attend them; and misery of one kind or other is shewn to be unavoidably connected with guilt. Love and admiration of virtuous characters, compas-

sion for the injured and the distressed, and indignation against the authors of their sufferings, are the sentiments, most generally excited by tragedy. And, therefore, though dramatic writers may sometimes, like other writers, be guilty of improprieties, though they may fail of placing virtue precisely in the due point of light, yet no reasonable person can deny tragedy to be a moral species of composition. Taking tragedies complexly, I am fully persuaded, that the impressions left by them upon the mind, are, on the whole, favourable to virtue and good dispositions. And, therefore, the zeal which some pious men have shewn against the entertainments of the theatre must rest only upon the abuse of comedy; which, indeed, has frequently been so great as to justify very severe censures against it.

The account which Aristotle gives of the design of tragedy is, that it is intended to purge our passions by means of pity and terror. This is somewhat obscure. Various senses have been put upon his words, and much altercation has followed among his commentators. Without entering into any controversy upon this head, the intention of tragedy may, I think, be more shortly and clearly defined, to improve our virtuous sensibility. If an author interests us in behalf of virtue, forms us to compassion for the distressed, inspires us with proper sentiments, on beholding the vicissitudes of life, and, by means of the concern which he raises for the misfortunes of others, leads us to guard against errors in our own conduct, he accomplishes all the moral purposes of tragedy.

In order to this end, the first requisite is, that he choose some moving and interesting story, and that he conduct it in a natural and probable manner. For we must observe, that the natural and the probable must always be the basis of tragedy; and are infinitely more important there, than in epic poetry. The object of the epic poet is to excite our admiration by the recital of heroic adventures; and a much slighter degree of probability is required when admiration is concerned, than when the tender passions are intended to be moved. The imagination, in the former case, is exalted, accommodates itself to the poet's idea, and can admit the marvellous without being shocked. But tragedy demands a stricter imitation of the life and actions of men. For the end which it pursues is, not so much to elevate imagination, as to affect the heart; and the heart always judges more nicely than the imagination, of what is probable. Passion can be raised, only by making the impressions of nature, and of truth, upon the mind. By introducing, therefore, any wild or romantic circumstances into his story, the poet never fails to check passion in its growth, and, of course, disappoints the main effect of tragedy.

This principle, which is founded on the clearest reason, excludes

from tragedy all machinery, or fabulous invention of the gods. Ghosts have, indeed, maintained their place; as being strongly founded on popular belief, and peculiarly suited to heighten the terror of tragic scenes. But all unravellings of the plot, which turn upon the interposition of deities, such as Euripides employs in several of his plays, are much to be condemned; both as clumsy and inartificial, and as destroying the probability of the story. This mixture of machinery, with the tragic action, is undoubtedly a blemish in the ancient theatre.

In order to promote that impression of probability which is so necessary to the success of tragedy, some critics have required, that the subject should never be a pure fiction invented by the poet, but built on real history, or known facts. Such, indeed, were generally, if not always, the subjects of the Greek tragedians. But I cannot hold this to be a matter of any great consequence. It is proved by experience, that a fictitious tale, if properly conducted, will melt the heart as much as any real history. In order to our being moved, it is not necessary that the events related did actually happen, provided they be such as might easily have happened in the ordinary course of nature. Even when tragedy borrows its materials from history, it mixes many a fictitious circumstance. The greatest part of readers neither know, nor inquire, what is fabulous, or what is historical, in the subject. They attend only to what is probable, and are touched by events which resemble nature. Accordingly, some of the most pathetic tragedies are entirely fictitious in the subject; such as Voltaire's Zaire and Alzire, the Orphan, Douglas, the Fair Penitent, and several others.

Whether the subject be of the real or feigned kind, that on which most depends for rendering the incidents in a tragedy probable, and by means of their probability affecting, is the conduct or management of the story, and the connexion of its several parts. To regulate this conduct, critics have laid down the famous rule of the three unities; the importance of which it will be necessary to discuss. But, in order to do this with more advantage, it will be necessary, that we first look backwards, and trace the rise and origin of tragedy, which will give light to several things relating to the subject.

Tragedy, like other arts, was, in its beginning, rude and imperfect. Among the Greeks, from whom our dramatic entertainments are derived, the origin of tragedy was no other than the song which was wont to be sung at the festival of Bacchus. A goat was the sacrifice offered to that god; after the sacrifice, the priests, with the company that joined them, sung hymns in honour of Bacchus; and from the name of the victim, τραγος a goat, joined with ᾠδη a song, undoubtedly arose the word tragedy.

These hymns, or lyric poems, were sung sometimes by the whole company, sometimes by separate bands, answering alternately to each other; making what we call a chorus, with its strophes and antistrophes. In order to throw some variety into this entertainment, and to relieve the singers, it was thought proper to introduce a person who, between the songs, should make a recitation in verse. Thespis, who lived about 536 years before the Christian era, made this innovation; and, as it was relished, Æschylus, who came fifty years after him, and who is properly the father of tragedy, went a step farther, introduced a dialogue between two persons, or actors, in which he contrived to interweave some interesting story, and brought his actors on a stage, adorned with proper scenery and decorations. All that these actors recited, was called episode, or additional song; and the songs of the chorus were made to relate no longer to Bacchus, their original subject, but to the story in which the actors were concerned. This began to give the drama a regular form, which was soon after brought to perfection by Sophocles and Euripides. It is remarkable, in how short a space of time tragedy grew up among the Greeks, from the rudest beginnings to its most perfect state. For Sophocles, the greatest and most correct of all the tragic poets, flourished only twenty-two years after Æschylus, and was little more than seventy years posterior to Thespis.

From the account which I have now given, it appears that the chorus was the basis or foundation of the ancient tragedy. It was not an ornament added to it; or a contrivance designed to render it more perfect; but, in truth, the dramatic dialogue was an addition to the chorus, which was the original entertainment. In process of time, the chorus, from being the principal, became only the accessory in tragedy; till at last, in modern tragedy, it has disappeared altogether; which forms the chief distinction between the ancient and the modern stage.

This has given rise to a question much agitated between the partisans of the ancients and the moderns, whether the drama has gained, or has suffered, by the abolition of the chorus? It must be admitted, that the chorus tended to render tragedy both more magnificent and more instructive and moral. It was always the most sublime and poetical part of the work; and being carried on by singing, and accompanied with music, it must, no doubt, have diversified the entertainment greatly, and added to its splendour. The chorus, at the same time, conveyed constant lessons of virtue. It was composed of such persons as might most naturally be supposed present on the occasion; inhabitants of the place where the scene was laid, often the companions of some of the principal actors, and therefore, in some degree, interested in the issue of the action. This company, which, in the days of

Sophocles, was restricted to the number of fifteen persons, was constantly on the stage, during the whole performance, mingled in discourse with the actors, entered into their concerns, suggested council and advice to them, moralized on all the incidents that were going on, and, during the intervals of the action, sung their odes or songs, in which they addressed the gods, prayed for success to the virtuous, lamented their misfortunes, and delivered many religious and moral sentiments.*

But notwithstanding the advantages which were obtained by means of the chorus, the inconveniences on the other side are so great, as to render the modern practice of excluding the chorus far more eligible upon the whole. For if a natural and probable imitation of human actions be the chief end of the drama, no other persons ought to be brought on the stage, than those who are necessary to the dramatic action. The introduction of an adventitious company of persons, who have but a slight concern in the business of the play, is unnatural in itself, embarrassing to the poet, and, though it may render the spectacle splendid, tends, undoubtedly, to render it more cold and uninteresting, because more unlike a real transaction. The mixture of music, or song, on the part of the chorus, with the dialogue carried on by the actors, is another unnatural circumstance, removing the representation still farther from the resemblance of life. The poet, besides, is subjected to innumerable difficulties in so contriving his plan, that the presence of the chorus, during all the incidents of the play, shall consist with any probability. The scene must be constantly, and often absurdly, laid in some public place, that the chorus may be supposed to have free access to it. To many things that ought

* The office of the chorus is thus described by Horace:

Actoris partes chorus, officiumque virile
Defendat; neu quid medios intercinat actus,
Quod non proposito conducat, et hæreat aptè.
Ille bonis faveatque, et concilietur amicis,
Et regat iratos, et amet peccare timentes:
Ille dapes laudet mensæ brevis; ille salubrem
Justitiam, legesque, et apertis otia portis.
Ille tegat commissa; deosque precetur, et oret
Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis.---De Art. Poet. 193.

The chorus must support an actor's part,
Defend the virtuous, and advise with art;
Govern the choleric, and the proud appease,
And the short feasts of frugal tables praise.
Applaud the justice of well-govern'd states,
And peace triumphant with her open gates.
Intrusted secrets let them ne'er betray,
But to the righteous gods with ardour pray,
That fortune, with returning smiles may bless
Afflicted worth, and impious pride depress;
Yet let their songs with apt coherence join,
Promote the plot, and aid the just design.---Francis.

to be transacted in private, the chorus must ever be witnesses; they must be the confederates of both parties, who come successively upon the stage, and who are, perhaps, conspiring against each other. In short, the management of a chorus is an unnatural confinement to a poet; it requires too great a sacrifice of probability in the conduct of the action; it has too much the air of theatrical decoration, to be consistent with that appearance of reality, which a poet must ever preserve in order to move our passions. The origin of tragedy among the Greeks, we have seen, was a choral song, or hymn to the gods. There is no wonder, therefore, that on the Greek stage it so long maintained possession. But it may confidently, I think, be asserted, that if, instead of the dramatic dialogue having been superadded to the chorus, the dialogue itself had been the first invention, the chorus would, in that case, never have been thought of.

One use, I am of opinion, might still be made of the ancient chorus, and would be a considerable improvement of the modern theatre; if, instead of that unmeaning, and often improperly chosen music, with which the audience is entertained in the intervals between the acts, a chorus were then to be introduced, whose music and songs, though forming no part of the play, should have a relation to the incidents of the preceding act, and to the dispositions which those incidents are presumed to have awakened in the spectators. By this means, the tone of passion would be kept up without interruption; and all the good effects of the ancient chorus might be preserved, for inspiring proper sentiments, and for increasing the morality of the performance, without those inconveniences which arose from the chorus forming a constituent part of the play, and mingling unseasonably, and unnaturally, with the personages of the drama.

After the view which we have taken of the rise of tragedy, and of the nature of the ancient chorus, with the advantages and inconveniences attending it, our way is cleared for examining, with more advantage, the three unities of action, place, and time, which have generally been considered as essential to the proper conduct of the dramatic fable.

Of these three, the first, unity of action, is, beyond doubt, far the most important. In treating of epic poetry, I have already explained the nature of it; as consisting in a relation which all the incidents introduced bear to some design or effect, so as to combine naturally into one whole. This unity of subject is still more essential to tragedy, than it is to epic poetry. For a multiplicity of plots, or actions, crowded into so short a space as tragedy allows, must, of necessity, distract the attention, and prevent passion from rising to any height. Nothing, therefore, is worse conduct in a tragic poet, than to carry on two independent actions in the same

play; the effect of which is, that the mind being suspended and divided between them, cannot give itself up entirely either to the one or the other. There may, indeed, be underplots; that is, the persons introduced, may have different pursuits and designs; but the poet's art must be shewn in managing these, so as to render them subservient to the main action. They ought to be connected with the catastrophe of the play, and to conspire in bringing it forward.* If there be any intrigue which stands separate and independent, and which may be left out without affecting the unravelling of the plot, we may always conclude this to be a faulty violation of unity. Such episodes are not permitted here, as in epic poetry.

We have a clear example of this defect in Mr. Addison's Cato. The subject of this tragedy is, the death of Cato; and a very noble personage Cato is, and supported by the author with much dignity. But all the love scenes in the play; the passion of Cato's two sons for Lucia, and that of Juba for Cato's daughter, are mere episodes; have no connexion with the principal action, and no effect upon it. The author thought his subject too barren in incidents, and in order to diversify it, he has given us, as it were, by the bye, a history of the amours that were going on in Cato's family; by which he hath both broken the unity of his subject, and formed a very unseasonable junction of gallantry, with the high sentiments, and public-spirited passions, which predominate in other parts, and which the play was chiefly designed to display.

We must take care not to confound the unity of the action with the simplicity of the plot. Unity, and simplicity, import different things in dramatic composition. The plot is said to be simple, when a small number of incidents are introduced into it. But it may be implex, as the critics term it, that is, it may include a considerable number of persons and events, and yet not be deficient in unity; provided all the incidents be made to tend towards the principal object of the play, and be properly connected with it. All the Greek tragedies not only maintain unity in the action, but are remarkably simple in the plot; to such a degree, indeed, as sometimes to appear to us too naked, and destitute of interesting events. In the Œdipus Coloneus, for instance, of Sophocles, the whole subject is no more than this: Œdipus, blind and miserable, wanders to Athens, and wishes to die there; Creon and his son Polynices arrive at the same time, and endeavour, separately, to persuade the old man to return to Thebes, each with a view to his own interest; he will not go; Theseus, the king of Athens, protects him; and the play ends with his death. In the Philoctetes of the same author, the plot, or fable, is nothing more than Ulysses, and the son of Achilles, studying to persuade the diseased Philoctetes to leave his uninhabited island, and go with them to

Troy; which he refuses to do, till Hercules, whose arrows he possessed, descends from heaven and commands him. Yet these simple, and seemingly barren subjects, are wrought up with so much art by Sophocles, as to become very tender and affecting.

Among the moderns, much greater variety of events has been admitted into tragedy. It has become more the theatre of passion than it was among the ancients. A greater display of characters is attempted; more intrigue and action are carried on; our curiosity is more awakened, and more interesting situations arise. This variety is, upon the whole, an improvement on tragedy; it renders the entertainment both more animated and more instructive; and when kept within due bounds, may be perfectly consistent with unity of subject. But the poet must, at the same time, beware of not deviating too far from simplicity in the construction of his fable.* For if he over-charges it with action and intrigue, it becomes perplexed and embarrassed; and, by consequence, loses much of its effect. Congreve's 'Mourning Bride,' a tragedy otherwise far from being void of merit, fails in this respect; and may be given as an instance of one standing in perfect opposition to the simplicity of the ancient plots. The incidents succeed one another too rapidly The play is too full of business. It is difficult for the mind to follow and comprehend the whole series of events, and, what is the greatest fault of all, the catastrophe, which ought always to be plain and simple, is brought about in a manner too artificial and intricate.

Unity of action must not only be studied in the general construction of the fable, or plot, but must regulate the several acts and scenes, into which the play is divided.

The division of every play, into five acts, has no other foundation than common practice, and the authority of Horace:

> Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu
> Fabula.——— DE ARTE POET.*

It is a division purely arbitrary. There is nothing in the nature of the composition which fixes this number rather than any other; and it had been much better if no such number had been ascertained, but every play had been allowed to divide itself into as many parts, or intervals, as the subject naturally pointed out. On the Greek stage, whatever may have been the case on the Roman, the division by acts was totally unknown. The word 'act,' never once occurs in Aristotle's Poetics, in which he defines exactly every part of the drama, and divides it into the beginning, the middle, and the end; or, in his own words, into the prologue, the episode, and the exode. The Greek tragedy was, indeed, one continued representation, from beginning to end. The stage was never empty,

* If you would have your play deserve success,
Give it five acts complete, nor more, nor less.—FRANCIS.

nor the curtain let fall. But at certain intervals, when the actors retired, the chorus continued and sung. Neither do these songs of the chorus divide the Greek tragedies into five portions, similar to our acts; though some of the commentators have endeavoured to force them into this office. But it is plain, that the intervals at which the chorus sung, are extremely unequal and irregular, suited to the occasion and the subject; and would divide the play sometimes into three, sometimes into seven or eight acts.*

As practice has now established a different plan on the modern stage, has divided every play into five acts, and made a total pause in the representation at the end of each act, the poet must be careful that this pause shall fall in a proper place; where there is a natural pause in the action, and where, if the imagination has any thing to supply, that is not represented on the stage, it may be supposed to have been transacted during the interval.

The first act ought to contain a clear exposition of the subject. It ought to be so managed as to awaken the curiosity of the spectators; and at the same time to furnish them with materials for understanding the sequel. It should make them acquainted with the personages who are to appear, with their several views and interests, and with the situation of affairs at the time when the play commences. A striking introduction, such as the first speech of Almeria, in the Mourning Bride, and that of Lady Randolph, in Douglas, produces a happy effect; but this is what the subject will not always admit. In the ruder times of dramatic writing, the exposition of the subject was wont to be made by a prologue, or by a single actor appearing, and giving full and direct information to the spectators. Some of Æschylus's and Euripides's plays are opened in this manner. But such an introduction is extremely inartificial, and therefore is now totally abolished, and the subject made to open itself by conversation, among the first actors who are brought upon the stage.

During the course of the drama, in the second, third, and fourth acts, the plot should gradually thicken. The great object which the poet ought here to have in view, is, by interesting us in his story, to keep our passions always awake. As soon as he allows us to languish, there is no more tragic merit. He should, therefore, introduce no personages but such as are necessary for carrying on the action. He should contrive to place those whom he finds it proper to introduce, in the most interesting situations. He should have no scenes of idle conversation or mere declamation The action of the play ought to be always advancing, and as it advances, the suspense, and the concern of the spectators, to be raised more and more. This is the great excellency of Shakspeare, that his scenes are full of sentiment and action, never of mere dis-

* See the Dissertation prefixed to Franklin's Translation of Sophocles.

course; whereas, it is often a fault of the best French tragedians, that they allow the action to languish for the sake of a long and artful dialogue. Sentiment, passion, pity, and terror, should reign throughout a tragedy. Every thing should be full of movements. A useless incident, or an unnecessary conversation, weakens the interest which we take in the action, and renders us cold and inattentive.

The fifth act is the seat of the catastrophe, or the unravelling of the plot, in which we always expect the art and genius of the poet to be most fully displayed. The first rule concerning it, is, that it be brought about by probable and natural means. Hence all unravellings which turn upon disguised habits, rencounters by night, mistakes of one person for another, and other such theatrical and romantic circumstances, are to be condemned as faulty. In the next place, the catastrophe ought always to be simple; to depend on few events, and to include but few persons. Passion never rises so high when it is divided among many objects, as when it is directed towards one or a few. And it is still more checked, if the incidents be so complex and intricate, that the understanding is put on the stretch to trace them, when the heart should be wholly delivered up to emotion. The catastrophe of the Mourning Bride, as I formerly hinted, offends against both these rules. In the last place, the catastrophe of a tragedy ought to be the reign of pure sentiment and passion. In proportion as it approaches, every thing should warm and glow. No long discourses; no cold reasonings; no parade of genius, in the midst of those solemn and awful events, that close some of the great revolutions of human fortune. There, if any where, the poet must be simple, serious, pathetic; and speak no language but that of nature.

The ancients were fond of unravellings, which turned upon what is called, an 'Anagnorisis,' or a discovery of some person to be different from what he was taken to be. When such discoveries are artfully conducted, and produced in critical situations, they are extremely striking: such as that famous one in Sophocles, which makes the whole subject of his Œdipus Tyrannus, and which is, undoubtedly, the fullest of suspense, agitation, and terror, that ever was exhibited on any stage. Among the moderns, two of the most distinguished anagnorises, are those contained in Voltaire's Merope and Mr. Home's Douglas: both of which are great master-pieces of the kind.

It is not essential to the catastrophe of a tragedy, that it should end unhappily. In the course of the play there may be sufficient agitation and distress, and many tender emotions raised by the sufferings and dangers of the virtuous, though, in the end, good men are rendered successful. The tragic spirit, therefore, does not want scope upon this system; and accordingly, the Athalie of

Racine, and some of Voltaire's finest plays, such as Alzire, Merope, and the Orphan of China, with some few English tragedies, likewise, have a fortunate conclusion. But, in general, the spirit of tragedy, especially of English tragedy, leans more to the side of leaving the impression of virtuous sorrow full and strong upon the heart.

A question, intimately connected with this subject, and which has employed the speculations of several philosophical critics, naturally occurs here: How it comes to pass that those emotions of sorrow which tragedy excites, afford any gratification to the mind? For, is not sorrow, in its nature, a painful passion? Is not real distress often occasioned to the spectators, by the dramatic representations at which they assist? Do we not see their tears flow? and yet, while the impression of what they have suffered remains upon their minds, they again assemble in crowds to renew the same distresses. The question is not without difficulty, and various solutions of it have been proposed by ingenious men.* The most plain and satisfactory account of the matter, appears to me to be the following. By the wise and gracious constitution of our nature, the exercise of all the social passions is attended with pleasure. Nothing is more pleasing and grateful, than love and friendship. Wherever man takes a strong interest in the concerns of his fellow-creatures, an internal satisfaction is made to accompany the feeling. Pity, or compassion, in particular, is, for wise ends, appointed to be one of the strongest instincts of our frame, and is attended with a peculiar attractive power. It is an affection which cannot but be productive of some distress, on account of the sympathy with the sufferers, which it necessarily involves. But, as it includes benevolence and friendship, it partakes, at the same time, of the agreeable and pleasing nature of those affections. The heart is warmed by kindness and humanity, at the same moment at which it is afflicted by the distresses of those with whom it sympathizes: and the pleasure arising from those kind emotions, prevails so much in the mixture, and so far counterbalances the pain, as to render the state of the mind, upon the whole, agreeable. At the same time, the immediate pleasure, which always goes along with the operation of the benevolent and sympathetic affections, derives an addition from the approbation of our own minds. We are pleased with ourselves for feeling as we ought, and for entering, with proper sorrow, into the concerns of the afflicted. In tragedy, besides, other adventitious circumstances concur to diminish the painful part of sympathy, and

* See Dr. Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, book i. ch. xi. where an account is given of the hypotheses of different critics on this subject; and where one is proposed, with which, in the main, I agree.—See also Lord Kaimes's Essays on the Principles of Morality, Essay I. And Mr. David Hume's Essay on Tragedy.

were obliged to make it always lie in some court of a palace, or some public area, to which all the persons concerned in the action might have equal access. This led to frequent improbabilities, by representing things as transacted there, which naturally ought to have been transacted before few witnesses, and in private apartments. The like improbabilities arose, from limiting themselves so much in point of time. Incidents were unnaturally crowded; and it is easy to point out several instances in the Greek tragedies, where events are supposed to pass during a song of the chorus, which must necessarily have employed many hours.

But though it seems necessary to set modern poets free from a strict observance of these dramatic unities, yet we must remember there are certain bounds to this liberty. Frequent and wild changes of time and place; hurrying the spectator from one distant city, or country, to another; or making several days or weeks to pass during the course of the representation, are liberties which shock the imagination, which give to the performance a romantic and unnatural appearance, and, therefore, cannot be allowed in any dramatic writer, who aspires to correctness. In particular, we must remember, that it is only between the acts, that any liberty can be given for going beyond the unities of time and place. During the course of each act, they ought to be strictly observed; that is, during each act the scene should continue the same, and no more time should be supposed to pass, than is employed in the representation of that act. This is a rule which the French tragedians regularly observe. To violate this rule, as is too often done by the English; to change the place, and shift the scene, in the midst of one act, shews great incorrectness, and destroys the whole intention of the division of a play into acts. Mr. Addison's Cato is remarkable, beyond most English tragedies, for regularity of conduct. The author has limited himself, in time, to a single day; and in place, has maintained the most rigorous unity. The scene is never changed; and the whole action passes in the hall of Cato's house, at Utica.

In general, the nearer a poet can bring the dramatic representation, in all its circumstances, to an imitation of nature and real life, the impression which he makes on us will always be the more perfect. Probability, as I observed at the beginning of the Lecture, is highly essential to the conduct of the tragic action, and we are always hurt by the want of it. It is this that makes the observance of the dramatic unities to be of consequence, as far as they can be observed, without sacrificing more material beauties. It is not, as has been sometimes said, that by the preservation of the unities of time and place, spectators are deceived into a belief of the reality of the objects which are set before them on the stage; and that, when those unities are violated, the charm is broken, and they dis-

cover the whole to be a fiction. No such deception as this can ever be accomplished. No one ever imagines himself to be at Athens, or Rome, when a Greek or Roman subject is presented on the stage. He knows the whole to be an imitation only: but he requires that imitation to be conducted with skill and verisimilitude. His pleasure, the entertainment which he expects, the interest which he is to take in the story, all depend on its being so conducted. His imagination, therefore, seeks to aid the imitation, and to rest on the probability; and the poet, who shocks him by improbable circumstances, and by awkward, unskilful imitation, deprives him of his pleasure, and leaves him hurt and displeased. This is the whole mystery of the theatrical illusion.

LECTURE XLVI.

TRAGEDY.—GREEK—FRENCH—ENGLISH TRAGEDY.

HAVING treated of the dramatic action in tragedy, I proceed next to treat of the characters most proper to be exhibited. It has been thought, by several critics, that the nature of tragedy requires the principal personages to be always of illustrious character, and of high or princely rank; whose misfortunes and sufferings, it is said, take faster hold of the imagination, and impress the heart more forcibly, than similar events, happening to persons in private life. But this is more specious than solid. It is refuted by facts. For the distresses of Desdemona, Monimia, and Belvidera, interest us as deeply as if they had been princesses or queens. The dignity of tragedy does, indeed, require, that there should be nothing degrading or mean, in the circumstances of the persons which it exhibits; but it requires nothing more. Their high rank may render the spectacle more splendid, and the subject seemingly of more importance, but conduces very little to its being interesting or pathetic; which depends entirely on the nature of the tale, on the art of the poet in conducting it, and on the sentiments to which it gives occasion. In every rank of life, the relations of father, husband, son, brother, lover, or friend, lay the foundation of those affecting situations, which makes man's heart feel for man.

The moral characters of the persons represented, are of much greater consequence than the external circumstances in which the poet places them. Nothing, indeed, in the conduct of tragedy, demands a poet's attention more, than so to describe his personages, and so to order the incidents which relate to them, as shall leave upon the spectators, impressions favourable to virtue, and to the administration of Providence. It is not necessary, for this end,

that poetical justice, as it is called, should be observed in the catastrophe of the piece. This has been long exploded from tragedy; the end of which is, to affect us with pity for the virtuous in distress, and to afford a probable representation of the state of human life, where calamities often befal the best, and a mixed portion of good and evil is appointed for all. But withal the author must beware of shocking our minds with such representations of life as tend to raise horror, or to render virtue an object of aversion. Though innocent persons suffer, their sufferings ought to be attended with such circumstances, as shall make virtue appear amiable and venerable; and shall render their condition, on the whole, preferable to that of bad men, who have prevailed against them. The stings, and the remorse of guilt, must ever be represented as productive of greater miseries, than any that the bad can bring upon the good.

Aristotle's observations on the characters proper for tragedy, are very judicious. He is of opinion, that perfect unmixed characters, either of good or ill men, are not the fittest to be introduced. The distresses of the one being wholly unmerited, hurt and shock us; and the sufferings of the other occasion no pity. Mixed characters, such as in fact we meet with in the world, afford the most proper field for displaying, without any bad effect on morals, the vicissitudes of life; and they interest us the more deeply, as they display emotions and passions which we have all been conscious of. When such persons fall into distress through the vices of others, the subject may be very pathetic; but it is always more instructive, when a person has been himself the cause of his misfortune, and when his misfortune is occasioned by the violence of passion, or by some weakness incident to human nature. Such subjects both dispose us to the deepest sympathy, and administer useful warnings to us for our own conduct.

Upon these principles, it surprises me that the story of Œdipus should have been so much celebrated by all the critics, as one of the fittest subjects for tragedy; and so often brought upon the stage, not by Sophocles only, but by Corneille also, and Voltaire. An innocent person, one, in the main, of a virtuous character, through no crime of his own, nay, not by the vices of others, but through mere fatality and blind chance, is involved in the greatest of all human miseries. In a casual rencounter he kills his father, without knowing him; he afterward is married to his own mother; and discovering himself in the end to have committed both parricide and incest, he becomes frantic, and dies in the utmost misery. Such a subject excites horror rather than pity. As it is conducted by Sophocles, it is indeed extremely affecting; but it conveys no instruction; it awakens in the mind no tender sympathy; it leaves no impression favourable to virtue or humanity.

It must be acknowledged, that the subjects of the ancient Greek tragedies were too often founded on mere destiny and inevitable misfortunes. They were too much mixed with their tales about oracles, and the vengeance of the gods, which led to many an incident sufficiently melancholy and tragical; but rather purely tragical, than useful or moral. Hence, both the Œdipuses of Sophocles, the Iphigenia in Aulis, the Hecuba of Euripides, and several of the like kind. In the course of the drama, many moral sentiments occurred. But the instruction which the fable of the play conveyed, seldom was any more, than that reverence was owing to the gods, and submission due to the decrees of destiny. Modern tragedy has aimed at a higher object, by becoming more the theatre of passion; pointing out to men the consequences of their own misconduct; shewing the direful effects which ambition, jealousy, love, resentment, and other such strong emotions, when misguided, or left unrestrained, produce upon human life. An Othello, hurried by jealousy to murder his innocent wife; a Jaffier, ensnared by resentment and want, to engage in a conspiracy, and then stung with remorse, and involved in ruin; a Siffredi, through the deceit which he employs for public-spirited ends, bringing destruction on all whom he loved; a Calista, seduced into a criminal intrigue, which overwhelms herself, her father, and all her friends in misery; these, and such as these, are the examples which tragedy now displays to public view; and by means of which, it inculcates on men the proper government of their passions.

Of all the passions which furnish matter to tragedy, that which has most occupied the modern stage is love. To the ancient theatre, it was in a manner wholly unknown. In few of their tragedies is it ever mentioned; and I remember no more than one which turns upon it, the Hippolitus of Euripides. This was owing to the national manners of the Greeks, and to that greater separation of the two sexes from one another, than has taken place in modern times; aided too, perhaps, by this circumstance, that no female actors ever appeared on the ancient stage. But though no reason appears for the total exclusion of love from the theatre, yet with what justice or propriety it has usurped so much place, as to be in a manner the sole hinge of modern tragedy, may be much questioned. Voltaire, who is no less eminent as a critic than as a poet, declares loudly and strongly against this predominancy of love, as both degrading the majesty, and confining the natural limits of tragedy. And assuredly, the mixing of it perpetually with all the great and solemn revolutions of human fortune which belong to the tragic stage, tends to give tragedy too much the air of gallantry and juvenile entertainment. The Athalie of Racine, the Meropé of Voltaire, the Douglas of Mr. Home are sufficient

proofs, that without any assistance from love, the drama is capable of producing its highest effects upon the mind.

This seems to be clear, that wherever love is introduced into tragedy, it ought to reign in it, and to give rise to the principal action. It ought to be that sort of love which possesses all the force and majesty of passion; and which occasions great and important consequences. For nothing can have a worse effect, or be more debasing to tragedy, than, together with the manly and heroic passions, to mingle a trifling love intrigue, as a sort of seasoning to the play. The bad effects of this are sufficiently conspicuous both in the Cato of Mr. Addison, as I had occasion before to remark, and in the Iphigenie of Racine.

After a tragic poet has arranged his subject, and chosen his personages, the next thing he must attend to, is the propriety of sentiments; that they be perfectly suited to the characters of those persons to whom they are attributed, and to the situations in which they are placed. The necessity of observing this general rule is so obvious, that I need not insist upon it. It is principally in the pathetic parts, that both the difficulty and the importance of it are the greatest. Tragedy is the region of passion. We come to it, expecting to be moved; and let the poet be ever so judicious in his conduct, moral in his intentions, and elegant in his style, yet if he fails in the pathetic, he has no tragic merit, we return cold and disappointed from the performance, and never desire to meet with it more.

To paint passion so truly and justly as to strike the hearts of the hearers with full sympathy, is a prerogative of genius given to few. It requires strong and ardent sensibility of mind. It requires the author to have the power of entering deeply into the characters which he draws; of becoming for a moment the very person whom he exhibits, and of assuming all his feelings. For, as I have often had occasion to observe, there is no possibility of speaking properly the language of any passion, without feeling it; and it is to the absence or deadness of real emotion, that we must ascribe the want of success in so many tragic writers, when they attempt being pathetic.

No man, for instance, when he is under the strong agitations of anger or grief, or any such violent passion, ever thinks of describing to another what his feelings at that time are; or of telling them what he resembles. This never was, and never will be, the language of any person, when he is deeply moved. It is the language of one who describes coolly the condition of that person to another; or it is the language of the passionate person himself, after his emotion has subsided, relating what his situation was in the moments of passion. Yet this sort of secondary description is what tragic poets too often give us, instead of the native and pri

mary language of passion. Thus, in Mr. Addison's Cato, when Lucia confesses to Portius her love for him, but, at the same time, swears with the greatest solemnity, that in the present situation of their country she will never marry him, Portius receives this unexpected sentence with the utmost astonishment and grief; at least the poet wants to make us believe that he so received it. How does he express these feelings?

Fix'd in astonishment, I gaze upon thee,
Like one just blasted by a stroke from Heav'n,
Who pants for breath, and stiffens yet alive
In dreadful looks; a monument of wrath.

This makes his whole reply to Lucia. Now did any person, who was of a sudden astonished and overwhelmed with sorrow, ever since the creation of the world, express himself in this manner? This is indeed an excellent description to be given us by another, of a person who was in such a situation. Nothing would have been more proper for a by-stander, recounting this conference, than to have said,

Fix'd in astonishment, he gazed upon her,
Like one just blasted by a stroke from Heav'n,
Who pants for breath, &c.

But the person, who is himself concerned, speaks, on such an occasion, in a very different manner. He gives vent to his feelings; he pleads for pity; he dwells upon the cause of his grief and astonishment; but never thinks of describing his own person and looks, and shewing us, by a simile, what he resembles. Such representations of passions are no better in poetry, than it would be in painting, to make a label issue from the mouth of a figure, bidding us remark, that this figure represents an astonished, or a grieved person.

On some other occasions, when poets do not employ this sort of descriptive language in passion, they are too apt to run into forced and unnatural thoughts, in order to exaggerate the feelings of persons, whom they would paint as very strongly moved. When Osmyn, in the Mourning Bride, after parting with Almeria, regrets in a long soliloquy, that his eyes only see objects that are present, and cannot see Almeria after she is gone; when Jane Shore, in Mr. Rowe's tragedy, on meeting with her husband in her extreme distress, and finding that he had forgiven her, calls on the rains to give her their drops, and the springs to give her their streams, that she may never want a supply of tears; in such passages, we see very plainly that it is neither Osmyn, nor Jane Shore, that speak; but the poet himself in his own person, who, instead of assuming the feelings of those whom he means to exhibit, and speaking as they would have done in such situations, is straining his fancy, and spurring up his genius to say something that shall be uncommonly strong and lively.

If we attend to the language that is spoken by persons under the influence of real passion, we shall find it always plain and simple; abounding indeed with those figures which express a disturbed and impetuous state of mind, such as interrogations, exclamations, and apostrophes; but never employing those which belong to the mere embellishment and parade of speech. We never meet with any subtilty or refinement, in the sentiments of real passion. The thoughts which passion suggests, are always plain and obvious ones, arising directly from its object. Passion never reasons, nor speculates, till its ardour begins to cool. It never leads to long discourse or declamation. On the contrary, it expresses itself most commonly in short, broken, and interrupted speeches; corresponding to the violent and desultory emotions of the mind.

When we examine the French tragedians by these principles, which seem clearly founded in nature, we find them often deficient. Though in many parts of tragic composition, they have great merit; though in exciting soft and tender emotions, some of them are very successful; yet in the high and strong pathetic, they generally fail. Their passionate speeches too often run into long declamation. There is too much reasoning and refinement; too much pomp and studied beauty in them. They rather convey a feeble impression of passion, than awaken any strong sympathy in the reader's mind.

Sophocles and Euripides are much more successful in this part of composition. In their pathetic scenes, we find no unnatural refinement; no exaggerated thoughts. They set before us the plain and direct feelings of nature, in simple expressive language; and therefore, on great occasions, they seldom fail of touching the heart.* This too is Shakspeare's great excellency; and to this it is principally owing, that his dramatic productions, notwithstanding their many imperfections, have been so long the favourites of the public. He is more faithful to the true language of nature, in the midst of passion, than any writer. He gives us this language, unadulterated by art; and more instances of it can be quoted from him than from all other tragic poets taken together. I shall refer only to that admirable scene in Macbeth, where Macduff receives

* Nothing, for instance, can be more touching and pathetic than the address which Medea, in Euripides, makes to her children, when she had formed the resolution of putting them to death: and nothing more natural, than the conflict which she is described as suffering within herself on that occasion.

> Φευ, φευ· τι προσδερκεσθε μ' ομμασιν τεκνα;
> Τι προσγελατε τον πανυστατον γελων;
> Αι, αι· τι δρασω; καρδια γαρ οιχεται,
> Γυναικες, ὁμμα φαιδρον ως ειδον τεκνων
> Ουκ ἀν δυναιμην. χαιρετω βουλευματα, &c.

EUR. MED. l. 1040.

the account of his wife and all his children being slaughtered in his absence. The emotions, first of grief, and then of the most fierce resentment rising against Macbeth, are painted in such a manner, that there is no heart but must feel them, and no fancy can conceive any thing more expressive of nature.

With regard to moral sentiments and reflections in tragedies, it is clear that they must not recur too often. They lose their effect, when unseasonably crowded. They render the play pedantic and declamatory. This is remarkably the case with those Latin tragedies which go under the name of Seneca, which are little more than a collection of declamations and moral sentences, wrought up with a quaint brilliancy, which suited the prevailing taste of that age.

I am not, however, of opinion, that moral reflections ought to be altogether omitted in tragedies. When properly introduced, they give dignity to the composition, and, on many occasions, they are extremely natural. When persons are under any uncommon distress, when they are beholding in others, or experiencing in themselves, the vicissitudes of human fortune; indeed, when they are placed in any of the great and trying situations of life, serious and moral reflections naturally occur to them, whether they be persons of much virtue or not. Almost every human being is, on such occasions, disposed to be serious. It is then the natural tone of the mind; and therefore no tragic poet should omit such proper opportunities, when they occur, for favouring the interests of virtue. Cardinal Wolsey's soliloquy upon his fall, for instance, in Shakspeare, when he bids a long farewell to all his greatness, and the advices which he afterward gives to Cromwell, are in his situation extremely natural; touch and please all readers; and are at once instructive and affecting. Much of the merit of Mr. Addison's Cato depends upon that moral turn of thought which distinguishes it. I have had occasion, both in this Lecture and in the preceding one, to take notice of some of its defects; and certainly neither for warmth of passion nor proper conduct of the plot, is it at all eminent. It does not, however, follow, that it is destitute of merit. For, by the purity and beauty of the language, by the dignity of Cato's character, by that ardour of public spirit, and those virtuous sentiments of which it is full, it has always commanded high regard; and has, both in our own country and among foreigners, acquired no small reputation.

The style and versification of tragedy ought to be free, easy, and varied. Our blank verse is happily suited to this purpose. It has sufficient majesty for raising the style; it can descend to the simple and familiar; it is susceptible of great variety of cadence; and is quite free from the constraint and monotony of rhyme. For monotony is, above all things, to be avoided by a tragic poet. If he maintains every where the same stateliness of style, if he

uniformly keeps up the same run of measure and harmony in his verse, he cannot fail of becoming insipid. He should not indeed sink into flat and careless lines; his style should always have force and dignity, but not the uniform dignity of epic poetry. It should assume that briskness and ease which is suited to the freedom of dialogue, and the fluctuations of passion.

One of the greatest misfortunes of the French tragedy is, its being always written in rhyme. The nature of the French language, indeed, requires this, in order to distinguish the style from mere prose. But it fetters the freedom of the tragic dialogue, fills it with a languid monotony, and is, in a manner, fatal to the high strength and power of passion. Voltaire maintains, that the difficulty of composing in French rhyme, is one great cause of the pleasure which the audience receives from the composition. Tragedy would be ruined, says he, if we were to write it in blank verse; take away the difficulty, and you take away the whole merit. A strange idea! as if the entertainment of the audience arose, not from the emotions which the poet is successful in awakening, but from a reflection on the toil which he endured in his closet, from assorting male and female rhymes. With regard to those splendid comparisons in rhyme, and strings of couplets, with which it was, some time ago, fashionable for our English poets to conclude, not only every act of a tragedy, but sometimes also the most interesting scenes, nothing need be said, but that they were the most perfect barbarisms; childish ornaments, introduced to please a false taste in the audience; and now universally laid aside.

Having thus treated of all the different parts of tragedy, I shall conclude the subject, with a short view of the Greek, the French, and the English stage, and with observations on the principal writers.

Most of the distinguishing characters of the Greek tragedy have been already occasionally mentioned. It was embellished with the lyric poetry of the chorus, of the origin of which, and of the advantages and disadvantages attending it, I treated fully in the preceding Lecture. The plot was always exceedingly simple. It admitted of few incidents. It was conducted, with a very exact regard to the unities of action, time, and place. Machinery, or the intervention of the gods, was employed; and, which is very faulty, the final unravelling sometimes made to turn upon it. Love, except in one or two instances, was never admitted into the Greek tragedy. Their subjects were often founded on destiny, or inevitable misfortunes. A vein of religious and moral sentiment always runs through them; but they made less use than the moderns of the combat of the passions, and of the distresses which our passions bring upon us. Their plots were all taken from the ancient

traditionary stories of their own nations. Hercules furnishes matter for two tragedies. The history of Œdipus, king of Thebes, and his unfortunate family, for six. The war of Troy, with its consequences, for no fewer than seventeen. There is only one of later date than this; which is the Persæ, or expedition of Xerxes, by Æschylus.

Æschylus is the father of the Greek tragedy, and exhibits both the beauties, and the defects, of an early original writer. He is bold, nervous, and animated; but very obscure and difficult to be understood; partly by reason of the incorrect state in which we have his works (they having suffered more by time, than any of the ancient tragedians), and partly on account of the nature of his style, which is crowded with metaphors, often harsh and tumid. He abounds with martial ideas and descriptions. He has much fire and elevation; less of tenderness, than of force. He delights in the marvellous. The ghost of Darius in the Persæ, the inspiration of Cassandra in Agamemnon, and the songs of the Furies in the Eumenides, are beautiful in their kind, and strongly expressive of his genius.

Sophocles is the most masterly of the three Greek tragedians; the most correct in the conduct of his subjects; the most just and sublime in his sentiments. He is eminent for his descriptive talent. The relation of the death of Œdipus, in his Œdipus Coloneus, and of the death of Hæmon and Antigone, in his Antigone, are perfect patterns of description to tragic poets. Euripides is esteemed more tender than Sophocles; and he is fuller of moral sentiments. But, in the conduct of his plays, he is more incorrect and negligent; his expositions, or openings of the subject, are made in a less artful manner; and the songs of his chorus, though remarkably poetical, have, commonly, less connexion with the main action, than those of Sophocles. Both Euripides and Sophocles, however, have very high merit as tragic poets. They are elegant and beautiful in their style; just, for the most part, in their thoughts; they speak with the voice of nature; and, making allowance for the difference of ancient and modern ideas, in the midst of all their simplicity, they are touching and interesting.

The circumstances of theatrical representation on the stages of Greece and Rome, were, in several respects, very singular, and widely different from what obtains among us. Not only were the songs of the chorus accompanied with instrumental music, but as the Abbé de Bos, in his Reflections on Poetry and Painting, has proved, with much curious erudition, the dialogue part had also a modulation of its own, which was capable of being set to notes; it was carried on in a sort of recitative between the actors, and was supported by instruments. He has farther attempted to prove, but the proof seems more incomplete, that on some occasions, on the

Roman stage, the pronouncing and gesticulating parts were divided; that one actor spoke, and another performed the gestures and motions corresponding to what the first said. The actors in tragedy wore a long robe, called Syrma, which flowed upon the stage. They were raised upon Cothurni, which rendered their stature uncommonly high; and they always played in masques. These masques were like helmets, which covered the whole head; the mouths of them were so contrived as to give an artificial sound to the voice, in order to make it be heard over their vast theatres; and the visage was so formed and painted, as to suit the age, characters, or dispositions, of the persons represented. When, during the course of one scene, different emotions were to appear in the same person, the masque is said to have been so painted, that the actor, by turning one or other profile of his face to the spectators, expressed the change of the situation. This, however, was a contrivance attended with many disadvantages. The masque must have deprived the spectators of all the pleasure which arises from the natural animated expression of the eye, and the countenance; and, joined with the other circumstances which I have mentioned, is apt to give us but an unfavourable idea of the dramatic representations of the ancients. In defence of them it must, at the same time, be remembered, that their theatres were vastly more extensive in the area than ours, and filled with immense crowds. They were always uncovered, and exposed to the open air. The actors were beheld at a much greater distance, and of course much more imperfectly by the bulk of the spectators, which both rendered their looks of less consequence, and might make it in some degree necessary that their features should be exaggerated, the sound of their voices enlarged, and their whole appearance magnified beyond the life, in order to make the stronger impression. It is certain, that, as dramatic spectacles were the favourite entertainments of the Greeks and Romans, the attention given to their proper exhibition, and the magnificence of the apparatus bestowed on their theatres, far exceeded any thing that has been attempted in modern ages.

In the compositions of some of the French dramatic writers, particularly Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, tragedy has appeared with much lustre and dignity. They must be allowed to have improved upon the ancients, in introducing more incidents, a greater variety of passions, a fuller display of characters, and in rendering the subject thereby more interesting. They have studied to imitate the ancient models in regularity of conduct. They are attentive to all the unities, and to all the decorums of sentiment and morality; and their style is, generally, very poetical and elegant. What an English taste is most apt to censure, in them, is the want of fervour, strength, and the natural language of passion here is often too much conversation in their pieces, instead of action.

They are too declamatory, as was before observed, when they should be passionate; too refined, when they should be simple. Voltaire freely acknowledges these defects of the French theatre. He admits, that their best tragedies do not make a sufficient impression on the heart; that the gallantry which reigns in them, and the long fine-spun dialogue with which they over-abound, frequently spread a languor over them; that the authors seemed to be afraid of being too tragic; and very candidly gives it as his judgment, that a union of the vehemence and the action, which characterize the English theatre, with the correctness and decorum of the French theatre, would be necessary to form a perfect tragedy.

Corneille, who is properly the father of French tragedy, is distinguished by the majesty and grandeur of his sentiments, and the fruitfulness of his imagination. His genius was unquestionably very rich, but seemed more turned towards the epic than the tragic vein; for, in general, he is magnificent and splendid, rather than tender and touching. He is the most declamatory of all the French tragedians. He united the copiousness of Dryden with the fire of Lucan, and he resembles them also in their faults, in their extravagance and impetuosity. He has composed a great number of tragedies, very unequal in their merit. His best and most esteemed pieces, are the Cid, Horace, Polyeucte, and Cinna.

Racine, as a tragic poet, is much superior to Corneille. He wanted the copiousness and grandeur of Corneille's imagination; but is free from his bombast, and excels him greatly in tenderness. Few poets, indeed, are more tender and moving than Racine. His Phædra, his Andromaque, his Athalie, and his Mithridate, are excellent dramatic performances, and do no small honour to the French stage. His language and versification are uncommonly beautiful. Of all the French authors, he appears to me to have most excelled in poetical style; to have managed their rhyme with the greatest advantage and facility, and to have given it the most complete harmony. Voltaire has, again and again, pronounced Racine's Athalie to be the *chef d'œuvre* of the French stage. It is altogether a sacred drama, and owes much of its elevation to the majesty of religion; but it is less tender and interesting than Andromaque. Racine has formed two of his plays upon plans of Euripides. In the Phædra he is extremely successful, but not so, in my opinion, in the Iphigenie; where he has degraded the ancient characters, by unseasonable gallantry. Achilles is a French lover; and Eriphile a modern lady.*

* The characters of Corneille and Racine are happily contrasted with each other, in the following beautiful lines of a French poet, which will gratify several readers:

CORNEILLE.

Illum nobilibus majestas evehit alis
Vertice tangentem nubes: stant ordine longo

Voltaire, in several of his tragedies, is inferior to none of his predecessors. In one great article, he has outdone them all, in the delicate and interesting situations which he has contrived to introduce. In these lies his chief strength. He is not, indeed, exempt from the defects of the other French tragedians, of wanting force, and of being sometimes too long and declamatory in his speeches; but his characters are drawn with spirit, his events are striking, and in his sentiments there is much elevation. His Zayre, Alzire, Merope, and Orphan of China, are four capital tragedies, and deserve the highest praise. What one might perhaps not expect, Voltaire is, in the strain of his sentiments, the most religious, and the most moral, of all tragic poets.

Though the musical dramas of Metastasio fulfil not the character of just and regular tragedies, they approach however so near to it, and possess so much merit, that it would be unjust to pass

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Magnanimi circum heroës, fulgentibus omnes
Induti trabeis; Polyeuctus, Cinna, Seleucus,
Et Cidus, et rugis signatus Horatius ora.

RACINE.

Hunc circumvolitat penna alludente Cupido,
Vincla triumphatis insternens florea scenis:
Colligit hæc mollis genius, levibusque catenis
Heroas stringit dociles, Pyrrhosque, Titosque,
Pelidasque ac Hippolytos, qui sponte sequuntur
Servitium, facilesque ferunt in vincula palmas.
Ingentes nimirum animos Cornelius ingens,
Et quales habet ipse, suis heröibus afflat
Sublimes sensus; vox olli mascula, magnum os,
Nec mortale sonans. Rapido fluit impete vena,
Vena Sophocleis non inficianda fluentis.
Racinius Gallis haud visos ante theatris
Mollior ingenio teneros induxit amores.
Magnanimos quamvis sensus sub pectore verset
Agrippina, licet Romano robore Burrhus
Polleat, et magni generosa superbia Mitri
Non semel eniteat, tamen esse ad mollia natum
Credideris vatem; vox olli mellea, lenis
Spiritus est; non ille animis vim concitus infert,
At cœcos animorum aditus rimatur, et imis
Mentibus occultos, syren penetrabilis, ictus
Insinuans, palpando ferit, læditque placendo.
Vena fluit facili non intermissa nitore,
Nec rapidos semper volvit cum murmure fluctus.
Agmine sed leni fluitat. Seu gramina lambit
Rivulus, et cœco per prata virentia lapsu,
Aufugiens, tacitâ fluit indeprensus arenâ;
Flore micant ripæ illimes; huc vulgus amantum
Convolat, et lacrymis auget rivalibus undas:
Singultus undæ referunt, gemitusque sonoros
Ingeminant, molli gemitus imitante susurro.

Templum Tragœdiæ, per FR. MARSY, è Societate Jesu.

them over without notice. For the elegance of style, the charms of lyric poetry, and the beauties of sentiment, they are eminent. They abound in well-contrived and interesting situations. The dialogue, by its closeness and rapidity, carries a considerable resemblance to that of the ancient Greek tragedies; and is both more animated and more natural, than the long declamation of the French theatre. But the shortness of the several dramas, and the intermixture of so much lyric poetry as belongs to this sort of composition, often occasions the course of the incidents to be hurried on too quickly, and prevents that consistent display of characters, and that full preparation of events, which are necessary to give a proper verisimilitude to tragedy.

It only now remains to speak of the state of tragedy in Great Britain; the general character of which is, that it is more animated and passionate than French tragedy, but more irregular and incorrect, and less attentive to decorum and to elegance. The pathetic, it must always be remembered, is the soul of tragedy. The English, therefore, must be allowed to have aimed at the highest species of excellence; though, in the execution, they have not always joined the other beauties that ought to accompany the pathetic.

The first object which presents itself to us on the English theatre, is the great Shakspeare. Great he may be justly called, as the extent and force of his natural genius, both for tragedy and comedy, are altogether unrivalled.* But, at the same time, it is genius shooting wild; deficient in just taste, and altogether unassisted by knowledge or art. Long has he been idolized by the British nation; much has been said, and much has been written concerning him; criticism has been drawn to the very dregs, in commentaries upon his words and witticisms; and yet it remains, to this day, in doubt, whether his beauties, or his faults, be greatest. Admirable scenes, and passages, without number, there are in his plays; passages beyond what are to be found in any other dramatic writer; but there is hardly any one of his plays which can be called altogether a good one, or which can be read with uninterrupted pleasure from beginning to end. Besides extreme irregularities in conduct, and grotesque mixtures of serious

* The character which Dryden has drawn of Shakspeare is not only just, but uncommonly elegant and happy. 'He was the man, who, of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily. When he describes any thing, you more than see it; you feel it too. They who accuse him of wanting learning, give him the greatest commendation. He was naturally learned. He needed not the spectacles of books to read nature. He looked inward, and found her there. I cannot say he is every where alike. Were he so, I should do him injury to compare him to the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat and insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches; his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him.' DRYDEN'S Essay of Dramatic Poetry.

and comic in one piece, we are often interrupted by unnatural thoughts, harsh expressions, a certain obscure bombast, and a play upon words, which he is fond of pursuing; and these interruptions to our pleasure too frequently occur, on occasions when we would least wish to meet with them. All these faults, however, Shakspeare redeems by two of the greatest excellences which any tragic poet can possess; his lively and diversified paintings of character; his strong and natural expressions of passion. These are his two chief virtues; on these his merit rests. Notwithstanding his many absurdities, all the while we are reading his plays, we find ourselves in the midst of our fellows; we meet with men, vulgar perhaps in their manners, coarse or harsh in their sentiments, but still they are men; they speak with human voices, and are actuated by human passions; we are interested in what they say or do, because we feel that they are of the same nature with ourselves. It is therefore no matter of wonder, that from the more polished and regular, but more cold and artificial, performances of other poets, the public should return with pleasure to such warm and genuine representations of human nature. Shakspeare possesses likewise the merit of having created, for himself, a sort of world of preternatural beings. His witches, ghosts, fairies, and spirits of all kinds, are described with such circumstances of awful and mysterious solemnity, and speak a language so peculiar to themselves, as strongly to affect the imagination. His two masterpieces, and in which, in my opinion, the strength of his genius chiefly appears, are Othello and Macbeth. With regard to his historical plays, they are, properly speaking, neither tragedies nor comedies; but a peculiar species of dramatic entertainment, calculated to describe the manners of the times of which he treats, to exhibit the principal characters, and to fix our imagination on the most interesting events and revolutions of our own country.*

After the age of Shakspeare, we can produce in the English language several detached tragedies of considerable merit. But we have not many dramatic writers, whose whole works are entitled either to particular criticism, or very high praise. In the tragedies of Dryden and Lee, there is much fire, but mixed with much fustian and rant. Lee's 'Theodosius, or the Force of Love,' is the best of his pieces, and, in some of the scenes, does not want tenderness and warmth; though romantic in the plan, and extravagant in the sentiments. Otway was endowed with a high portion of the tragic spirit; which appears to great advantage in his two principal tragedies, 'The Orphan,' and 'Venice Preserved.' In these, he is perhaps too tragic; the distresses being so deep as to tear

* See an excellent defence of Shakspeare's historical plays, and several just observations on his peculiar excellences as a tragic poet, in Mrs. Montague's Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspeare.

and overwhelm the mind. He is a writer, doubtless, of genius, and strong passion; but, at the same time, exceedingly gross and indelicate. No tragedies are less moral than those of Otway. There are no generous or noble sentiments in them; but a licentious spirit often discovers itself. He is the very opposite of the French decorum; and has contrived to introduce obscenity and indecent allusions, into the midst of deep tragedy.

Rowe's tragedies make a contrast to those of Otway. He is full of elevated and moral sentiments. The poetry is often good, and the language always pure and elegant; but, in most of his plays, he is too cold and uninteresting; and flowery rather than tragic. Two, however, he has produced, which deserve to be exempted from this censure, Jane Shore and the Fair Penitent; in both of which, there are so many tender and truly pathetic scenes, as to render them justly favourites of the public.

Dr. Young's Revenge is a play which discovers genius and fire; but wants tenderness, and turns too much upon the shocking and direful passions. In Congreve's Mourning Bride, there are some fine situations, and much good poetry. The two first acts are admirable. The meeting of Almeria with her husband Osmyn, in the tomb of Anselmo, is one of the most solemn and striking situations to be found in any tragedy. The defects in the catastrophe, I pointed out in the last Lecture. Mr. Thomson's tragedies are too full of a stiff morality, which renders them dull and formal. Tancred and Sigismunda far excels the rest; and for the plot, the characters, and sentiments, justly deserves a place among the best English tragedies. Of later pieces, and of living authors, it is not my purpose to treat.

Upon the whole, reviewing the tragic compositions of different nations, the following conclusions arise. A Greek tragedy is the relation of any distressful or melancholy incident; sometimes the effect of passion or crime, oftener of the decree of the gods, simply exposed; without much variety of parts or events, but naturally and beautifully set before us; heightened by the poetry of the chorus. A French tragedy is a series of artful and refined conversations, founded upon a variety of tragical and interesting situations; carried on with little action and vehemence; but with much poetical beauty, and high propriety and decorum. An English tragedy is the combat of strong passions, set before us in all their violence; producing deep disasters; often irregularly conducted; abounding in action; and filling the spectators with grief. The ancient tragedies were more natural and simple; the modern are more artful and complex. Among the French there is more correctness; among the English, more fire. Andromaque and Zayre soften, Othello and Venice Preserved rend, the heart. It deserves remark, that three of the greatest master-pieces of the

French tragic theatre, turn wholly upon religious subjects: the Athalie of Racine, the Polyeucte of Corneille, and the Zayre of Voltaire. The first is founded upon an historical passage of the Old Testament; in the other two, the distress arises from the zeal and attachment of the principal personages to the Christian faith; and in all the three, the authors have, with much propriety, availed themselves of the majesty which may be derived from religious ideas.

LECTURE XLVII.

COMEDY.—GREEK AND ROMAN---FRENCH---ENGLISH COMEDY.

COMEDY is sufficiently discriminated from tragedy, by its general spirit and strain. While pity and terror, and the other strong passions, form the province of the latter, the chief, or rather sole instrument of the former, is ridicule. Comedy proposes for its object, neither the great sufferings, nor the great crimes, of men; but their follies and slighter vices, those parts of their character, which raise in beholders a sense of impropriety, which expose them to be censured and laughed at by others, or which render them troublesome in civil society.

This general idea of comedy, as a satirical exhibition of the improprieties and follies of mankind, is an idea very moral and useful. There is nothing in the nature, or general plan, of this kind of composition, that renders it liable to censure. To polish the manners of men, to promote attention to the proper decorums of social behaviour, and, above all, to render vice ridiculous, is doing a real service to the world. Many vices might be more successfully exploded, by employing ridicule against them, than by serious attacks and arguments. At the same time, it must be confessed, that ridicule is an instrument of such a nature, that when managed by unskilful, or improper hands, there is hazard of its doing mischief, instead of good, to society. For ridicule is far from being, as some have maintained it to be, a proper test of truth. On the contrary, it is apt to mislead, and seduce, by the colours which it throws upon its objects; and it is often more difficult to judge, whether these colours be natural and proper, than it is to distinguish between simple truth and error. Licentious writers, therefore, of the comic class, have too often had it in their power to cast a ridicule upon characters and objects which did not deserve it. But this is a fault, not owing to the nature of comedy, but to the genius and turn of the writers of it. In the hands of a loose, immoral author, comedy will mislead and corrupt; while, in those

of a virtuous and well-intentioned one, it will be not only a gay and innocent, but a laudable and useful entertainment. French comedy is an excellent school of manners; while English comedy has been too often the school of vice.

The rules respecting the dramatic action, which I delivered in the first Lecture upon tragedy, belong equally to comedy; and hence, of course, our disquisitions concerning it are shortened. It is equally necessary to both these forms of dramatic composition, that there be a proper unity of action and subject, that the unities of time and place be as much as possible preserved; that is, that the time of the action be brought within reasonable bounds; and the place of the action never changed, at least, not during the course of each act; that the several scenes or successive conversations be properly linked together; that the stage be never totally evacuated till the act closes; and that the reason should appear to us, why the personages, who fill up the different scenes, enter and go off the stage, at the time when they are made to do so. The scope of all these rules, I shewed, was to bring the imitation as near as possible to probability; which is always necessary, in order to any imitation giving us pleasure. This reason requires, perhaps, a stricter observance of the dramatic rules in comedy, than in tragedy. For the action of comedy being more familiar to us than that of tragedy, more like what we are accustomed to see in common life, we judge more easily of what is probable, and are more hurt by the want of it. The probable and the natural, both in the conduct of the story, and in the characters and sentiments of the persons who are introduced, are the great foundation, it must always be remembered, of the whole beauty of comedy.

The subjects of tragedy are not limited to any country or to any age. The tragic poet may lay his scene in whatever region he pleases. He may form his subject upon the history, either of his own, or of a foreign country; and he may take it from any period that is agreeable to him, however remote in time. The reverse of this holds in comedy, for a clear and obvious reason. In the great vices, great virtues, and high passions, men of all countries and ages resemble one another; and are therefore equally subjects for the tragic muse. But those decorums of behaviour, those lesser discriminations of character, which afford subject for comedy, change with the differences of countries and times; and can never be so well understood by foreigners, as by natives. We weep for the heroes of Greece and Rome, as freely as we do for those of our own country: but we are touched with the ridicule of such manners and such characters only, as we see and know; and therefore the scene and subject of comedy should always be laid in our own country, and in our own times. The comic poet, who aims at correcting improprieties and follies of behaviour, should study ' to

catch the manners living as they rise.' It is not his business to amuse us with a tale of the last age, or with a Spanish or a French intrigue; but to give us pictures taken from among ourselves; to satirize reigning and present vices; to exhibit to the age a faithful copy of itself, with its humours, its follies, and its extravagances. It is only by laying his plan in this manner, that he can add weight and dignity to the entertainment which he gives us. Plautus, it is true, and Terence, did not follow this rule. They laid the scene of their comedies in Greece, and adopted the Greek laws and customs. But it must be remembered, that comedy was, in their age, but a new entertainment in Rome; and that then they contented themselves with imitating, often with translating merely, the comedies of Menander, and other Greek writers. In aftertimes, it is known that the Romans had the 'Comœdia Togata,' or what was founded on their own manners, as well as the 'Comœdia Palliata,' or what was taken from the Greeks.

Comedy may be divided into two kinds; comedy of character, and comedy of intrigue. In the latter, the plot, or the action of the play, is made the principal object. In the former, the display of some peculiar character is chiefly aimed at; the action is contrived altogether with a view to this end; and is treated as subordinate to it. The French abound most in comedies of character. All Moliere's capital pieces are of this sort; his Avare, for instance, Misanthrope, Tartuffe; and such are Destouches's also, and those of the other chief French comedians. The English abound more in comedies of intrigue. In the plays of Congreve, and, in general, in all our comedies, there is much more story, more bustle and action, than on the French theatre.

In order to give this sort of composition its proper advantage, these two kinds should be properly mixed together. Without some interesting and well-conducted story, mere conversation is apt to become insipid. There should be always as much intrigue, as to give us something to wish, and something to fear. The incidents should so succeed one another, as to produce striking situations, and to fix our attention; while they afford at the same time a proper field for the exhibition of character. For the poet must never forget, that to exhibit characters and manners is his principal object. The action in comedy, though it demands his care, in order to render it animated and natural, is a less significant and important part of the performance, than the action in tragedy: as in comedy, it is what men say, and how they behave, that draws our attention, rather than what they perform, or what they suffer. Hence it is a great fault to overcharge it with too much intrigue, and those intricate Spanish plots that were fashionable for a while, carried on by perplexed apartments, dark entries, and disguised habits, are now justly condemned and laid aside: for by such

conduct, the main use of comedy was lost. The attention of the spectators, instead of being directed towards any display of characters, was fixed upon the surprising turns and revolutions of the intrigue; and comedy was changed into a mere novel.

In the management of characters, one of the most common faults of comic writers, is the carrying of them too far beyond life. Wherever ridicule is concerned, it is indeed extremely difficult to hit the precise point where true wit ends, and buffoonery begins When the miser, for instance, in Plautus, searching the person whom he suspects for having stolen his casket, after examining first his right hand, and then his left, cries out, 'ostende etiam tertiam,' 'shew me your third hand' (a stroke too which Moliere has copied from him), there is no one but must be sensible of the extravagance. Certain degrees of exaggeration are allowed to the comedian; but there are limits set to it by nature and good taste; and supposing the miser to be ever so much engrossed by his jealousy and his suspicions, it is impossible to conceive any man in his wits suspecting another of having more than two hands.

Characters in comedy ought to be clearly distinguished from one another; but the artificial contrasting of characters, and the introducing them always in pairs, and by opposites, give too theatrical and affected an air to the piece. This is become too common a resource of comic writers, in order to heighten their characters, and display them to more advantage. As soon as the violent and impatient person arrives upon the stage, the spectator knows that, in the next scene, he is to be contrasted with the mild and good-natured man; or if one of the lovers introduced be remarkably gay and airy, we are sure that his companion is to be a grave and serious lover; like Frankly and Bellamy, Clarinda and Jacintha, in Dr. Hoadly's Suspicious Husband. Such production of characters by pairs, is like the employment of the figure antithesis in discourse, which, as I formerly observed, gives brilliancy indeed upon occasions, but is too apparently a rhetorical artifice. In every sort of composition, the perfection of art is to conceal art. A masterly writer will therefore give us his characters, distinguished rather by such shades of diversity as are commonly found in society, than marked with such strong oppositions, as are rarely brought into actual contrast, in any of the circumstances of life.

The style of comedy ought to be pure, elegant, and lively, very seldom rising higher than the ordinary tone of polite conversation; and, upon no occasion, descending into vulgar, mean, and gross expressions. Here the French rhyme, which in many of their comedies they have preserved, occurs as an unnatural bondage. Certainly, if prose belongs to any composition whatever, it is to that which imitates the conversation of men in ordinary life. One of the most difficult circumstances in writing comedy, and one too,

upon which the success of it very much depends, is to maintain, throughout, a current of easy, genteel, unaffected dialogue, without pertness and flippancy; without too much studied and unseasonable wit; without dulness and formality. Too few of our English comedies are distinguished for this happy turn of conversation; most of them are liable to one or other of the exceptions I have mentioned. The Careless Husband, and, perhaps, we may add the Provoked Husband, and the Suspicious Husband, seem to have more merit than most of them, for easy and natural dialogue.

These are the chief observations that occur to me, concerning the general principles of this species of dramatic writing, as distinguished from tragedy. But its nature and spirit will be still better understood, by a short history of its progress; and a view of the manner in which it has been carried on by authors of different nations.

Tragedy is generally supposed to have been more ancient among the Greeks than comedy. We have fewer lights concerning the origin and progress of the latter. What is most probable, is, that, like the other, it took its rise accidentally from the diversions peculiar to the feast of Bacchus, and from Thespis and his cart; till, by degrees, it diverged into an entertainment of a quite different nature from solemn and heroic tragedy. Critics distinguish three stages of comedy among the Greeks; which they call the ancient, the middle, and the new.

The ancient comedy consisted in direct and avowed satire against particular known persons, who were brought upon the stage by name. Of this nature are the plays of Aristophanes, eleven of which are still extant: plays of a very singular nature, and wholly different from all compositions which have, since that age, borne the name of comedy. They shew what a turbulent and licentious republic that of Athens was, and what unrestrained scope the Athenians gave to ridicule, when they could suffer the most illustrious personages of their state, their generals, and their magistrates, Cleon, Lamachus, Nicias, Alcibiades, not to mention Socrates the philosopher, and Euripides the poet, to be publicly made the subject of comedy. Several of Aristophanes's plays are wholly poetical satires upon public management, and the conduct of generals and statesmen, during the Peloponnesian war. They are so full of political allegories and allusions, that it is impossible to understand them without a considerable knowledge of the history of those times. They abound too with parodies of the great tragic poets, particularly of Euripides; to whom the author bore much enmity, and has written two comedies, almost wholly in order to ridicule him.

Vivacity, satire, and buffoonery, are the characteristics of Aristophanes. Genius and force he displays upon many occasions;

but his performances, upon the whole, are not calculated to give us any high opinion of the Attic taste of wit in his age. They seem, indeed, to have been composed for the mob. The ridicule employed in them is extravagant; the wit, for the most part, buffoonish and farcical; the personal raillery, biting and cruel; and the obscenity that reigns in them is gross and intolerable. The treatment given by this comedian to Socrates the philosopher, in his play of 'The Clouds,' is well known; but however it might tend to disparage Socrates in the public esteem, P. Brumoy, in his Theatre Grec, makes it appear, that it could not have been, as is commonly supposed, the cause of decreeing the death of that philosopher, which did not happen till twenty-three years after the representation of Aristophanes's Clouds. There is a chorus in Aristophanes's plays; but altogether of an irregular kind. It is partly serious, partly comic; sometimes mingles in the action, sometimes addresses the spectators, defends the author, and attacks his enemies.

Soon after the days of Aristophanes, the liberty of attacking persons on the stage by name, being found of dangerous consequence to the public peace, was prohibited by law. The chorus also was, at this period, banished from the comic theatre, as having been an instrument of too much licence and abuse. Then, what is called the Middle Comedy took rise, which was no other than an elusion of the law. Fictitious names, indeed, were employed; but living persons were still attacked, and described in such a manner as to be sufficiently known. Of these comic pieces we have no remains. To them succeeded the New Comedy; when the stage being obliged to desist wholly from personal ridicule, became, what it is now, the picture of manners and characters, but not of particular persons. Menander was the most distinguished author of this kind among the Greeks; and both from the imitations of him by Terence, and the account given of him by Plutarch, we have much reason to regret that his writings have perished; as he appears to have reformed, in a very high degree, the public taste, and to have set the model of correct, elegant, and moral comedy.

The only remains which we now have of the new comedy, among the ancients, are the plays of Plautus and Terence; both of whom were formed upon the Greek writers. Plautus is distinguished for very expressive language, and a great degree of the vis comica. As he wrote in an early period, he bears several marks of the rudeness of the dramatic art, among the Romans, in his time. He opens his plays with prologues, which sometimes pre-occupy the subject of the whole piece. The representation too, and the action of the comedy, are sometimes confounded; the actor departing from his character, and addressing the audience. There is too much low wit and scurrility in Plautus; too much of quaint con-

ceit, and play upon words. But withal, he displays more variety, and more force than Terence. His characters are always strongly marked, though sometimes coarsely. His Amphytrion has been copied both by Moliere and by Dryden; and his Miser also (in the Aulularia) is the foundation of a capital play of Moliere's, which has been once and again imitated on the English stage. Than Terence, nothing can be more delicate, more polished and elegant His style is a model of the purest and most graceful Latinity. His dialogue is always decent and correct; and he possesses, beyond most writers, the art of relating with that beautiful picturesque simplicity, which never fails to please. His morality is, in general, unexceptionable. The situations which he introduces, are often tender and interesting; and many of his sentiments touch the heart. Hence, he may be considered as the founder of that serious comedy, which has, of late years, been revived, and of which I shall have occasion afterward to speak. If he fails in any thing, it is in sprightliness and strength. Both in his characters, and in his plots, there is too much sameness and uniformity throughout all his plays; he copied Menander, and is said not to have equalled him.* In order to form a perfect comic author, a union would be requisite of the spirit and fire of Plautus, with the grace and correctness of Terence.

When we enter on the view of modern comedy, one of the first objects which presents itself, is the Spanish theatre, which has been remarkably fertile in dramatic productions. Lopez de Vega, Guillin, and Calderon, are the chief Spanish comedians. Lopez de Vega, who is by much the most famous of them, is said to have written above a thousand plays; but our surprise at the number of his productions will be diminished, by being informed of their nature. From the account which M. Perron de Castera, a French writer, gives of them, it would seem, that our Shakspeare is perfectly a regular and methodical author, in comparison of Lopez. He throws aside all regard to the three unities, or to any of the established forms of dramatic writing. One play often includes many years, nay, the whole life of a man. The scene, during the first act, is laid in Spain, the next in Italy, and the third in Africa. His plays are mostly of the historical kind, founded on the annals of the country; and they are, generally, a sort of tragi-comedies; or a mixture of heroic speeches, serious incidents, war, and slaugh-

* Julius Cæsar has given us his opinion of Terence, in the following lines, which are preserved in the Life of Terence, ascribed to Suetonius.

Tu quoque, tu in summis, ô dimidiate Menander,
Poneris, et merito, puri sermonis amator;
Lenibus atque utinam scriptis adjuncta foret vis
Comica, ut æquato virtus polleret honore
Cum Græcis, neque in hac despectus parte jaceres;
Unum hoc maceror, et doleo tibi deesse, Terenti.

ter, with much ridicule and buffoonery. Angels and gods, virtues and vices, Christian religion, and pagan mythology, are all frequently jumbled together. In short, they are plays like no other dramatic compositions; full of the romantic and extravagant. At the same time, it is generally admitted, that in the works of Lopez de Vega, there are frequent marks of genius, and much force of imagination; many well-drawn characters; many happy situations; many striking and interesting surprises; and, from the source of his rich invention, the dramatic writers of other countries are said to have frequently drawn their materials. He himself apologises for the extreme irregularity of his composition, from the prevailing taste of his countrymen, who delighted in a variety of events, in strange and surprising adventures, and a labyrinth of intrigues, much more than in a natural and regularly conducted story.

The general characters of the French comic theatre are, that it is correct, chaste, and decent. Several writers of considerable note it has produced, such as Regnard, Dufresny, Dancourt, and Marivaux; but the dramatic author in whom the French glory most, and whom they justly place at the head of all their comedians, is the famous Moliere. There is, indeed, no author, in all the fruitful and distinguished age of Louis XIV. who has attained a higher reputation than Moliere; or, who has more nearly reached the summit of perfection in his own art, according to the judgment of all the French critics. Voltaire boldly pronounces him to be the most eminent comic poet of any age or country: nor, perhaps, is this the decision of mere partiality; for taking him upon the whole, I know none who deserves to be preferred to him. Moliere is always the satirist only of vice or folly. He has selected a great variety of ridiculous characters peculiar to the times in which he lived, and he has generally placed the ridicule justly. He possessed strong comic powers; he is full of mirth and pleasantry; and his pleasantry is always innocent. His comedies in verse, such as the Misanthrope and Tartuffe, are a kind of dignified comedy, in which vice is exposed, in the style of elegant and polite satire. In his prose comedies, though there is abundance of ridicule, yet there is never any thing found to offend a modest ear, or to throw contempt on sobriety and virtue. Together with those high qualities, Moliere has also some defects, which Voltaire, though his professed panegyrist, candidly admits. He is acknowledged not to be happy in the unravelling of his plots. Attentive more to the strong exhibition of characters, than to the conduct of the intrigue, his unravelling is frequently brought on with too little preparation, and in an improbable manner. In his verse comedies, he is sometimes not sufficiently interesting, and too full of long speeches; and in his more risible pieces in prose, he is censured for being too farcical. Few writers, however, if any, ever possessed the spirit, or attained

the true end of comedy, so perfectly, upon the whole, as Moliere His 'Tartuffe,' in the style of grave comedy, and his 'Avare,' in the gay, are accounted his two capital productions.

From the English theatre, we are naturally led to expect a greater variety of original characters in comedy, and bolder strokes of wit and humour, than are to be found on any other modern stage. Humour is, in a great measure, the peculiar province of the English nation. The nature of such a free government as ours; and that unrestrained liberty which our manners allow to every man, of living entirely after his own taste, afford full scope to the display of singularity of character, and to the indulgence of humour in all its forms. Whereas, in France, the influence of a despotic court, the more established subordination of ranks, and the universal observance of the forms of politeness and decorum, spread a much greater uniformity over the outward behaviour and characters of men. Hence comedy has a more ample field, and can flow with a much freer vein in Britain, than in France. But it is extremely unfortunate, that, together with the freedom and boldness of the comic spirit in Britain, there should have been joined such a spirit of indecency and licentiousness, as has disgraced English comedy beyond that of any nation since the days of Aristophanes

The first age, however, of English comedy, was not infected by this spirit. Neither the plays of Shakspeare, nor those of Ben Jonson, can be accused of immoral tendency. Shakspeare's general character, which I gave in the last Lecture, appears with as great advantage in his comedies, as in his tragedies; a strong, fertile, and creative genius, irregular in conduct, employed too often in amusing the mob, but singularly rich and happy in the description of characters and manners. Jonson is more regular in the conduct of his pieces, but stiff and pedantic; though not destitute of dramatic genius. In the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, much fancy and invention appear, and several beautiful passages may be found. But, in general, they abound with romantic and improbable incidents, with overcharged and unnatural characters, and with coarse and gross allusions. These comedies of the last age, by the change of public manners, and of the turn of conversation, since their time, are now become too obsolete to be very agreeable. For we must observe, that comedy, depending much on the prevailing modes of external behaviour, becomes sooner antiquated than any other species of writing; and, when antiquated, it seems harsh to us, and loses its power of pleasing. This is especially the case with respect to the comedies of our own country, where the change of manners is more sensible and striking than in any foreign production. In our own country, the present mode of behaviour is always the standard of politeness; and whatever departs

from it appears uncouth; whereas in the writings of foreigners, we are less acquainted with any standard of this kind, and of course are less hurt by the want of it. Plautus appeared more antiquated to the Romans, in the age of Augustus, than he does now to us. It is a high proof of Shakspeare's uncommon genius, that, notwithstanding these disadvantages, his character of Falstaff is to this day admired, and his 'Merry Wives of Windsor' read with pleasure.

It was not till the era of the restoration of King Charles II. that the licentiousness which was observed, at that period, to infect the court, and the nation in general, seized, in a peculiar manner, upon comedy as its province, and, for almost a whole century retained possession of it. It was then, first, that the rake became the predominant character, and, with some exceptions, the hero of every comedy. The ridicule was thrown, not upon vice and folly, but much more commonly upon chastity and sobriety. At the end of the play, indeed, the rake is commonly, in appearance, reformed, and professes that he is to become a sober man; but throughout the play, he is set up as the model of a fine gentleman; and the agreeable impression made by a sort of sprightly licentiousness, is left upon the imagination, as a picture of the pleasurable enjoyment of life; while the reformation passes slightly away, as a matter of mere form. To what sort of moral conduct such public entertainments as these tend to form the youth of both sexes, may be easily imagined. Yet this has been the spirit which has prevailed upon the comic stage of Great Britain, not only during the reign of Charles II. but throughout the reigns of King William and Queen Anne, and down to the days of King George II.

Dryden was the first considerable dramatic writer after the Restoration; in whose comedies, as in all his works, there are found many strokes of genius, mixed with great carelessness, and visible marks of hasty composition. As he sought to please only, he went along with the manners of the times; and has carried through all his comedies that vein of dissolute licentiousness, which was then fashionable. In some of them, the indecency was so gross as to occasion, even in that age, a prohibition of being brought upon the stage.*

Since his time, the writers of comedy of greatest note have been Cibber, Vanburgh, Farquhar, and Congreve. Cibber has written a great many comedies; and though, in several of them, there be

'* The mirth which he excites in comedy will, perhaps, be found not so much to arise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character, nicely distinguished, and diligently pursued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and surprises, from jests of action, rather than sentiment. What he had of humorous, or passionate, he seems to have had, not from nature, but from other poets; if not always a plagiary, yet, at least, an imitator.' JOHNSON'S Life of Dryden.

much sprightliness, and a certain pert vivacity peculiar to him, yet they are so forced and unnatural in the incidents, as to have generally sunk into obscurity, except two, which have always continued in high favour with the public, 'The Careless Husband,' and the 'Provoked Husband.' The former is remarkable for the polite and easy turn of the dialogue; and, with the exception of one indelicate scene, is tolerably moral too in the conduct, and in the tendency. The latter, 'The Provoked Husband' (which was the joint production of Vanburgh and Cibber), is, perhaps, on the whole, the best comedy in the English language. It is liable, indeed, to one critical objection, of having a double plot: as the incidents of the Wronghead family, and those of Lord Townly's, are separate, and independent of each other. But this irregularity is compensated by the natural characters, the fine painting, and the happy strokes of humour, with which it abounds. We are, indeed, surprised to find so unexceptionable a comedy proceeding from two such loose authors: for, in its general strain, it is calculated to expose licentiousness and folly; and would do honour to any stage.

Sir John Vanburgh has spirit, wit, and ease; but he is, to the last degree, gross and indelicate. He is one of the most immoral of all our comedians. His 'Provoked Wife' is full of such indecent sentiments and allusions, as ought to explode it out of all reputable society. His 'Relapse' is equally censurable; and these are his only two considerable pieces. Congreve is, unquestionably, a writer of genius. He is lively, witty, and sparkling; full of character, and full of action. His chief fault as a comic writer is, that he overflows with wit. It is often introduced unseasonably; and almost every where, there is too great a proportion of it for natural well bred conversation.* Farquhar is a light and gay writer; less correct, and less sparkling than Congreve; but he has more ease, and, perhaps, fully as great a share of the vis comica. The two best, and least exceptionable of his plays, are the 'Recruiting Officer,' and the 'Beaux Stratagem.' I say the least exceptionable · for, in general, the tendency of both Congreve and Farquhar's plays is immoral. Throughout them all, the rake, the loose intrigue, and the life of licentiousness, are the objects continually held up to view; as if the assemblies of a great and polished nation could be amused with none but vicious objects. The indelicacy of these writers, in the female characters which they introduce, is particularly remarkable. Nothing can be more awkward than their representations of a woman of virtue and honour. Indeed, there are hardly any female characters in their plays, except two; women of

* Dr. Johnson says of him in his Life, that 'his personages are a kind of intellectual gladiators; every sentence is to ward, or to strike; the contest of smartness is never intermitted; his wit is a meteor, playing to and fro, with alternate coruscations.

loose principles, or, when a virtuous character is attempted to be drawn, women of affected manners!

The censure which I have now passed upon these celebrated comedians, is far from being overstrained or severe. Accustomed to the indelicacy of our own comedy, and amused with the wit and humour of it, its immorality too easily escapes our observation. But all foreigners, the French especially, who are accustomed to a better regulated and more decent stage, speak of it with surprise and astonishment. Voltaire, who is, assuredly, none of the most austere moralists, plumes himself not a little upon the superior *bienseance* of the French theatre; and says, that the language of English comedy is the language of debauchery, not of politeness. M. Moralt, in his letters upon the French and English nations, ascribes the corruption of manners in London to comedy, as its chief cause. Their comedy, he says, is like that of no other country; it is the school in which the youth of both sexes familiarize themselves with vice, which is never represented there as vice, but as mere gaiety. As for comedies, says the ingenious M. Diderot, in his observations upon dramatic poetry, the English have none; they have, in their place, satires, full indeed of gaiety and force, but without morals, and without taste; 'sans mæurs et sans gout. There is no wonder, therefore, that Lord Kaimes, in his Elements of Criticism, should have expressed himself, upon this subject, of the indelicacy of English comedy, in terms much stronger than any that I have used; concluding his invective against it in these words: 'How odious ought those writers to be, who thus spread infection through their native country; employing the talents which they have received from their Maker most traitorously against himself, by endeavouring to corrupt and disfigure his creatures. If the comedies of Congreve did no rack him with remorse in his last moments, he must have been lost to all sense of virtue.' Vol. ii. 479.

I am happy, however, to have it in my power to observe, that, of late years, a sensible reformation has begun to take place in English comedy. We have, at last, become ashamed of making our public entertainments rest wholly upon profligate characters and scenes; and our later comedies, of any reputation, are much purified from the licentiousness of former times. If they have not the spirit, the ease, and the wit of Congreve and Farquhar, in which respect they must be confessed to be somewhat deficient; this praise, however, they justly merit, of being innocent and moral. For this reformation, we are, questionless, much indebted to the French theatre, which has not only been, at all times, more chaste and inoffensive than ours, but has, within these few years, produced a species of comedy, of still a graver turn than any that I have yet mentioned. This, which is called the serious, or tender comedy, and was termed by its opposers, 'La Comedie Larmoyante,' is not

altogether a modern invention. Several of Terence's plays, as the Andria, in particular, partake of this character; and as we know that Terence copied Menander, we have sufficient reason to believe that his comedies, also, were of the same kind. The nature of this composition does not by any means exclude gaiety and ridicule, but it lays the chief stress upon tender and interesting situations; it aims at being sentimental, and touching the heart by means of the capital incidents; it makes our pleasure arise, not so much from the laughter which it excites, as from the tears of affection and joy which it draws forth.

In English, Steele's Conscious Lovers is a comedy which approaches to this character, and it has always been favourably received by the public. In French, there are several dramatic compositions of this kind, which possess considerable merit and reputation, such as the 'Melanide,' and 'Préjugé à la Mode,' of La Chaussée; the 'Père de Famille,' of Diderot; the 'Cénie,' of Mad. Graffigny; and the 'Nanine,' and 'L'Enfant Prodigue,' of Voltaire.

When this form of comedy first appeared in France, it excited a great controversy among the critics. It was objected to as a dangerous and unjustifiable innovation in composition. It is not comedy, said they, for it is not founded on laughter and ridicule. It is not tragedy, for it does not involve us in sorrow. By what name then can it be called? or what pretensions hath it to be comprehended under dramatic writing? But this was trifling, in the most egregious manner, with critical names and distinctions, as if these had invariably fixedthe essence, and ascertained the limits, of every sort of composition. Assuredly, it is not necessary that all comedies should be formed on one precise model. Some may be entirely light and gay; others may be more serious; some may be of a mixed nature; and all of them, properly executed, may furnish agreeable and useful entertainment to the public, by suiting the different tastes of men.* Serious and tender comedy has no title to claim to itself the possession of the stage, to the exclusion of ridicule and gaiety. But when it retains only its proper place, without usurping the province of any other; when it is carried on with resemblance to real life, and without introducing romantic and unnatural situations, it may certainly prove both an interesting and an agreeable species of dramatic writing. If it become insipid and drawling, this must be imputed to the fault of the author, not to the nature of the composition, which may admit much liveliness and vivacity.

In general, whatever form comedy assumes, whether gay or

* 'Il y a beaucoup de très-bonnes pièces, où il ne règne que de la gaicté; d'autres toutes sérieuses; d'autres mélangées; d'autres, où l'attendrissement va jusqu'aux larmes. Il ne faut donner exclusion à aucun genre; et si l'on me demandoit, quel genre est le meilleur? Je repondrois, celui qui est le mieux traité.'—VOLTAIRE.

serious, it may always be esteemed a mark of society advancing in true politeness, when those theatrical exhibitions, which are designed for public amusement, are cleared from indelicate sentiment, or immoral tendancy. Though the licentious buffoonery of Aristophanes amused the Greeks for a while, they advanced, by degrees, to a chaster and juster taste; and the like progress of refinement may be concluded to take place among us, when the public receive with favour dramatic compositions of such a strain and spirit, as entertained the Greeks and Romans, in the days of Menander and Terence.

THE END.

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